the weekly Standard

MARCH 24, 2003

EMPIRES, ANCIENT & MODERN
Max Boot • Christopher Caldwell
Hugh Hewitt

DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ

Why it's possible—and necessary

Reuel Marc Gerecht • Stephen Schwartz

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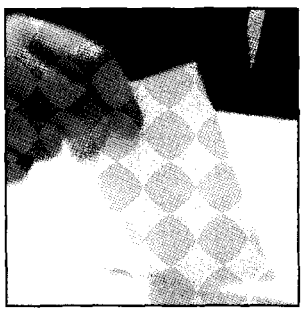

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the weekly Standard

THE WEEKLY STANDARD (ISSN 1083-3013) is published weekly (except the first week in January, the second week in July, the third week in August, and the first week in September) by News America Incorporated, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96153, Washington, DC 20090-6153; changes of address to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, P.O. Box 96127, Washington, DC 20077-7767. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Yearly subscriptions, $78.00. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7653 for subscription inquiries. Visa/MasterCard payment accepted. Cover price, $3.95. Back issues, $3.95 (includes postage and handling). Send manuscripts and letters to the editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. For a copy of THE WEEKLY STANDARD Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, THE WEEKLY STANDARD, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. THE WEEKLY STANDARD Advertising Sales Office in Washington, DC, is 1-202-293-4900. Advertising Production: Call John L. Mackall 1-202-496-3354. Copyright 2003, News America Incorporated. All rights reserved. No material in THE WEEKLY STANDARD may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. THE WEEKLY STANDARD is a trademark of News America Incorporated.

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The Lip-Service Liberators

Columnist E.J. Dionne wrote recently in the *Washington Post* about what he called the "wreckage" caused by President Bush's Iraq policy. The column consisted of unmitigated criticism of Bush, but Dionne suddenly threw in this sentence: "Of course the world would be better off without Saddam Hussein." This is lip service of a special kind. The Bush critic offers no credible plan for liberating Iraq and scarcely mentions Saddam but wants you to know he or she has no illusions about the Iraqi dictator and is as eager for his ouster as any hawk. THE SCRAPBOOK has a name for these folks—lip-service liberators.

There are many of them and the list is growing. The French ambassador to the United States, Jean-David Levitte, is one. At a breakfast with Washington reporters, he spent an hour defending the French position of doing as little as possible to remove Saddam. But he's no squish on the subject. "If Saddam Hussein disappears, that would be best for the Iraqi people." Of course there's no French strategy for making him disappear.

Another lip service liberator is Bob Herbert, columnist for the *New York Times*. He wrote last week about the plight of Iraqi children, noting that "1 out of every 8" dies before age 5. "This generational catastrophe is the fault of Saddam Hussein, no question," he writes. He devotes the rest of the column to arguing against military action to liberate Iraq. Finally, he suggests "a search for a better alternative." What alternative? Herbert hasn't a clue. His knock on Saddam is just lip service.

Robert Scheer, the shrill leftist columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, barely qualifies as a lip-service liberator. He hates Bush but notes in one column that Saddam is "clearly a brutal bully, savage in the repression of his own people." But he's not as bad as that awful Bush, according to Scheer, who exonerates Saddam on several counts. A subordinate clause in another Scheer screed zinging Bush's Iraq policy says Saddam is "evil in so many ways." That's it. No elaboration. Pure lip service.

Also unable to muster more than a subordinate clause is the only Nobel laureate from Plains, Ga., Jimmy Carter. His March 9 *New York Times* op-ed, ostensibly on "just war" theory, manages this scant mention of Saddam: "Despite Saddam Hussein's other serious crimes . . ."

Even the normally hawkish AFL-CIO showed lip-service-liberator tendencies in its resolution last month on Iraq. The gist was that Bush needs "the support of our allies and the major nations of the world" before going to war against Saddam, and that the president has "not fulfilled his responsibility to make a compelling and coherent explanation . . . about the need for military action." But all this is preceded by a paragraph about the horrible deeds of Saddam. "Everybody starts off by saying that" in their antiwar resolutions, said one labor leader. Indeed, they do. ♦

Why We Fight

Norman Mailer—who certain readers over the age of 50 may remember having taken seriously once upon a time—has signed his name to an . . . essay, we suppose you'd have to call it, in the current *New York Review of Books*. The piece is called "Only in America," and it purports to reveal the "undisclosed logic" by which "the president and his inner cohort" are leading the nation toward war with Iraq. And what is this "logic," you ask? What turns out to be the "prime subtext" of U.S. international security policy with respect to Saddam Hussein, his Iraqi subjects, and the Persian Gulf generally?

No, not weapons of mass destruction or terrorism, silly. Not even oil. To "flag conservatives" like George W. Bush, Mailer explains, the most attractive "perk" of wars like the one now under discussion is their likely deterrent effect on the American orgasm. "Should America become an international military machine huge enough to conquer all adversaries . . . American sexual freedom, all that gay, feminist, lesbian, transvestite hullabaloo, will be seen as too much of a luxury and will be put back into the closet again."

You hadn't thought of that, had you? For that matter, Mailer acknowledges, "the flag conservatives themselves may not even be wholly aware of the scope of it, not all of them. Not yet."

Long as we're on the subject of undisclosed logic, THE SCRAPBOOK feels it ought to reveal the prime subtext of the *New York Review*'s decision to publish Mailer's latest senescent discharge in the first place. To the *Review*'s editors, we imagine, what Norman Mailer has to say about war and sex is actually important.

Trouble is—though the *Review* itself may not be wholly aware of the scope of it, not all of them, not yet—there's zero evidence for that proposition. ♦

Sami Al-Arian Update

At last report, former University of South Florida professor Sami Al-Arian, confined to a cell in Tampa's Hillsborough County Jail pursuant to a 50-count federal terrorism-conspiracy indictment released on February 20, was conducting a hunger strike "to

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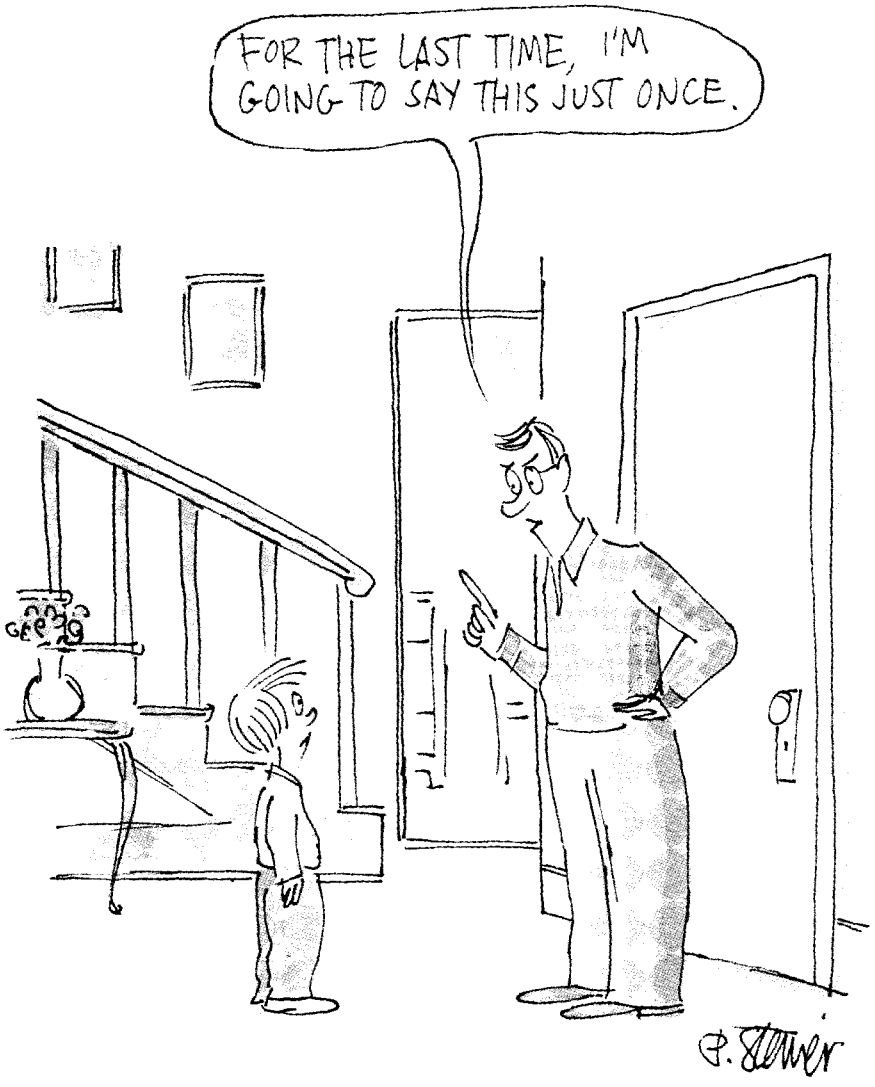

protest this unjust persecution of me, because of my beliefs and opinions."

Or, at least, "he calls it a 'hunger strike,'" Col. David M. Parrish, commander of the Hillsborough facility now tells the *Tampa Tribune*. But "it's not like any I've ever seen before." Al-Arian, Parrish reports, is downing Carnation Instant Breakfast three times a day. Technically speaking, no, that "would not be considered a hunger strike," the *Tribune*'s quoted expert, University of North Carolina nutritionist Carolyn Barrett, explains. "You definitely wouldn't starve on it." In fact, given that the six-foot, 215-pound, diabetic Al-Arian entered jail a full 37 pounds over his recommended weight, the professor's current Carnation consumption might even be beneficial.

In other news, the *St. Petersburg Times* reports that in May 1987, a group of the professor's family and friends "stormed a Ramadan service at the mosque that would later become a spiritual and political base for Sami Al-Arian." Al-Arian's sister-in-law, Hala Al-Najjar, was arrested for assault in the incident after a pregnant worshipper she'd attacked and knocked to the ground suffered a miscarriage. Al-Arian's wife, Nahla, and her brother, Mazen Al-Najjar, were also questioned by police. As was a man named Muhammed al-Khatib, since indicted with Al-Arian as a terrorist co-conspirator.

No prosecution resulted from the fracas; the apparently fearful miscarriage victim declined to press charges. But over the next two years, the *Times* notes, Al-Arian's clique completed a purge of the mosque's previously moderate congregation, "handed title" of the property to a radically inclined "clearinghouse for Wahhabism" called the "North American Islamic Trust," and began to receive "secret funding linked to Saudi Arabia."

Such are the "beliefs and opinions" in defense of which Sami Al-Arian is brave enough to go on a diet. ♦

How About an Order of Lies with That?

Wesley J. Smith wrote in these pages recently of the latest outrage from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—a PR campaign called "Holocaust on Your Plate," which compares the killing of food animals to the slaughter of Jews by the Nazis. But there's something rotten about this campaign besides the concept.

* An Isaac Bashevis Singer quote credited as the idea for the campaign was never spoken by him. It was a piece of dialogue in his novel *Enemies, A Love Story*. But that hasn't stopped PETA from misrepresenting the quote.

* The U.S. Holocaust Museum says Matt Prescott, a 21-year-old youth outreach coordinator, used a personal e-mail account and never identified himself as part of PETA when he obtained permission to use the museum's photos in the campaign. But PETA continues to use the photos.

Fred S. Zeidman, chairman of the museum, has called PETA's campaign "utterly shameless and contemptible." That's putting it mildly. ♦

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Casual

Happy Trials

"I should have killed him when I had the chance. Now I'm f—d!" said the man as he was driven away in a squad car. He used to spend his mornings at a methadone clinic, but not any more. Not after being charged with stabbing a man in the thigh. He claims the reason he was carrying a knife in his "hoody" the day of the crime was to protect himself from a guy who had threatened the day before to "get my Gat!"

No, this isn't a scene from *Belly*, and the two men are not DMX and Mos Def. This is a true story. I heard it the other day in a District of Columbia courtroom. If you live in D.C., you know that every two years you'll get called for jury duty. And somehow by the end of the voir dire, I found myself sitting in the jury box.

Great, I thought. This is the last thing I need—to worry about someone else's problems. My fellow jurors shared the sentiment. The old man next to me shook his head and mumbled, "They always pick me."

Yet as soon as the trial began, we were completely engrossed. The charge was assault with a deadly weapon. On the stand, the defendant admitted carrying a 10-inch kitchen knife the day of the crime. The victim had suffered a 12-inch laceration to his thigh. A police officer testified that the alleged stabber had said after his arrest that he should have killed the victim when he'd had the chance.

But the prosecution's witnesses were unconvincing. The victim and a buddy of his contradicted each other several times. We learned that the defendant had shared an apartment with the victim and had kicked him out for failing to pay his share of the rent. Was the victim giving the defendant's girlfriend crack cocaine in lieu of rent? Some testimony suggested as much, but was stricken from the record, though not from our memories.

Through all of this, I kept comparing these real court proceedings with those I'd seen in movies and on television. No one cross-examined like Sam Waterston. Not once did either attorney yell, "I want the truth!" "This whole court is out of order!" or "Here endeth the lesson!" In fact, the U.S. attorney kept stopping abruptly mid-sentence and begging the court's indulgence. The defense attorney mistook a police officer for a detective and repeatedly asked to approach the bench, until the judge said, "No, ask your next question." The lawyers kept objecting without providing a reason like "Counsel is leading the witness" or "The question is irrelevant." The attorneys objected to each other's closing statements, which annoyed the judge, who, incidentally, had no gavel.

Darren Gygi

What impressed me most was the attentiveness of the jurors. Many of us took notes, which we used during deliberations—the one scene almost never shown in courtroom dramas. After a thorough discussion of the lack of credible testimony for the prosecution, most of us agreed there was room for reasonable doubt as to the defendant's guilt. Why couldn't the victim and his friend tell a straight story? Why had they falsely denied having jobs? Why didn't a doctor take the stand? Why was the knife itself not placed in evidence? Was the injury deliberate, or did it happen in the scuffle? (Only once did I hear a juror cite a precedent from *Judge Judy*.)

One juror held out, convinced the defendant had acted intentionally. He asked for time to think about it overnight. When we reconvened the next day and took another vote, he looked down, exhaled, and said, "Not guilty." We all thought it was over.

But then a blonde girl who had previously voted with the rest of us suddenly announced she thought the defendant was guilty, "but I just want to get out of here, so I say not guilty." We stared at her in disbelief. The trial had lasted too long, she griped. "Do I care what happens to him?" she asked, and, "What about O.J.?"

Then came the Oscar moment, straight out of *Twelve Angry Men*. An elderly black man wearing tinted glasses spoke up for the first time. Turning to the blonde, he said: "Young lady, you cannot decide on another man's life just out of convenience. You have to make the decision based on your conscience. And what you decide now, you are going to have to live with for the rest of your life." (She stuck to her "not guilty" vote, though what she really thought we'll never know.)

A few days later I received an e-mail from our forewoman. She said she still wondered if we'd done the right thing. I told her I thought about it, too. By letting the defendant back out on the street, were we only inviting his victim to seek street justice?

"I think we did our best," I said. And there endeth the lesson.

Victorino Matus

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What's the difference between $110,100 and $27,800?

$110,100

You could be paying for it.

$27,800

An obstetrician in Illinois pays $110,100 a year for malpractice insurance. Next door in Wisconsin, the same doctor would pay $27,800. Why?

There's no good answer, except that the U.S. medical malpractice system is badly broken, and it's threatening the accessibility, affordability and quality of healthcare for millions. Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans cover nearly one in three Americans. Eighty-eight percent of these plans report that the malpractice problem increases healthcare costs and decreases access to care – especially for high-risk specialties. Three-quarters of physicians responding to a Harris survey in February said malpractice concerns cause them to order unnecessary tests and make redundant referrals.

Americans know they're picking up the tab for these preventable costs. A separate Harris survey found that 58 percent favor new legislation to limit medical liability and reduce the costs of medical malpractice insurance.

The problem doesn't end there. A new report by the Department of Health and Human Services found that because of the malpractice predicament, "more patients in more states are facing greater difficulty in obtaining access to doctors." Rising rates cause some physicians to refuse high-risk procedures, move their practices to more malpractice-friendly jurisdictions or retire from medicine entirely. Again, Americans know the score. Fifty-nine percent think that malpractice suits and doctors' fear of being sued harm the quality of medical care.

Fortunately, there are steps we can take now to fix this problem, before it gets worse. President Bush has proposed new legislation, based on a California law with a quarter-century track record of controlling malpractice costs. The President's proposal has the support of the American Medical Association and the American Hospital Association. We believe it offers an excellent framework.

Like California and other states that have enacted malpractice reform, the President's proposal would limit "non-economic" damages to $250,000. An analysis by *USA Today* shows that states limiting such awards to $500,000 or less have average malpractice premiums 23 percent lower than states without limits.

As the nation's largest family of healthcare insurance companies, it's clear to us that solving the problem of rising healthcare costs requires a coordinated approach to out-of-control malpractice costs. Most Americans agree.

We need to work together to develop a solution that works for patients, doctors and the nation as a whole. President Bush's proposal is a good place to start.

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Operation Free Iraq

It's unfortunate that every advocate for "peace" will not make the effort to read Stephen F. Hayes's "The Horrors of 'Peace'" (Mar. 10). If nothing else, our country owes the Iraqi people a debt of honor to finish the job that we encouraged them to start in Iraq in 1991. The words of some of the Iraqi Americans he quoted brought me to tears as I considered the horror of Saddam's regime and the fact that we had a chance to end this 12 years ago.

I have a cousin on the way to Kuwait today in the U.S. Army, and I am proud of him and fearful for him as well. But what we are doing in Iraq is the right thing for many reasons, and Hayes's article confirms that for me.

Karl D. Wiggins
Northport, AL

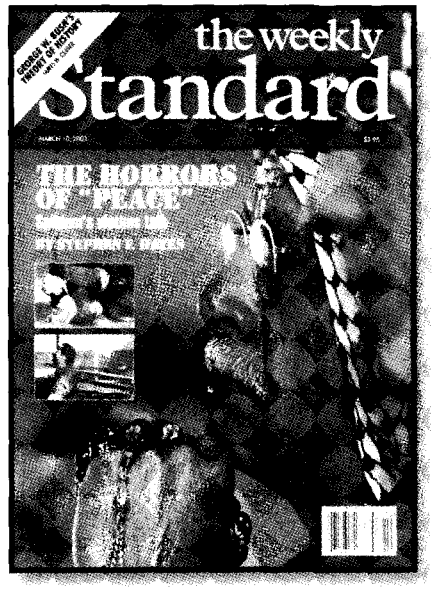
I cried early-morning tears while reading Stephen Hayes's "The Horrors of 'Peace.'" I am the son of an Armenian immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1922. He survived the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians by the Muslim Turks in eastern Turkey in 1915. The refrain "Save the starving Armenians" was a familiar one heard in those days. Well, America did help. The United States sent shiploads of food to the docks in eastern Turkey. However, most of it was commandeered by the black marketeers and never reached the people for whom it was intended. Not until the appointment of Herbert Hoover to head the Near East Relief Agency did the profiteering cease. It ceased because he flew to eastern Turkey to supervise, personally, the distribution of the food.

That is why I can write this letter to you today. My father and his three siblings, his aunt, and his mother arrived on these shores because of the fortitude, courage, dedication, and honor of one man, who led others in the crusade to save "the starving Armenians." What other country does such things? There is no other.

The light of the history of America is no longer being taught in the history classes of public schools and the universities. The dark episodes, only, are iterated. My father, Peter Bilezikian, is 90 years old. He survived and is alive today because there was a man who embraced the good that America can do. Herbert Hoover is the hero of those Armenians who know of the history of the Near East Relief Agency, as George W. Bush will be to the Iraqi people when his actions put to flight the darkness of Saddam Hussein.

James Bilezikian
Miami, FL

Stephen F. Hayes's "The Horrors of 'Peace'" is fascinating and definitely deserves wide publicity. For the networks to avoid covering Paul Wolfowitz's event due to the "language difficulties" is preposterous. I'm sure the



real reasons have more to do with the "difficulty" of the Iraqi Americans' dreams and aspirations being out of line with the antiwar mentality of most major media outlets.

Keep up the excellent work.

David M. Woosley
San Angelo, TX

Anti-PETA Vegetarian

The "Holocaust on Your Plate" campaign by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) which equates the slaughter of Jews to the slaughter of pigs, is utterly revolting ("The Most Tasteless PR Campaign Ever," Wesley J. Smith, Mar. 10). It is also a perfect example of why PETA will never receive one red cent of mine as long as I live. I have been a vegetarian for about 10 years and PETA has been making a bad name for me since day one. I normally do not tell people that I am a vegetarian for fear that their heads will fill with images of people chaining themselves to things or throwing paint on old women wearing furs.

The "Holocaust on Your Plate" campaign is also a perfect illustration of why PETA will never be successful in swaying large numbers to their side. PETA seems to believe that the only way to persuade people to stop eating meat is to put humans and animals on the same moral plane.

Aside from being completely unnecessary (and in my view untrue), people don't take kindly to attempts to upend the moral pecking order. A much more reasonable goal might be to put the pig in the slaughterhouse on the same moral plane as Fluffy the family dog. Another less shrill argument might be that just because you can consume something might not mean that it's a good idea to do so.

PETA's extremist, in-your-face style does more to hurt than help the vegetarian case with the average reasonable person.

Christine Petrella
Glen Allen, VA

Lefties on the Air

While liberalism may be popular for a fictional president on television, it remains to be seen whether it will work as a talk show on radio ("Radio Free Liberal," William Tucker, Mar. 10). To get an idea of what such a radio show would sound like, however, just tune in to *Washington Journal* on C-SPAN any given morning. When Democrat callers to this program are not comparing the current administration to Nazi Germany, they are blathering about conspiracy theories that sound like they were taken from a bad Oliver Stone movie.

And if liberal radio isn't willing to resort to vulgarity to achieve market success, its backers can always do what

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liberals have done in the past—get a government subsidy.

THOMAS M. BEATTIE
Mt. Vernon, VA

FROGS CAN WRITE!

I READ WITH INTEREST Melana Zyla Vickers's article "Saddam's French Connection" (Mar. 10).

I am what you call, for lack of a better term, a Francophile. I live in France. I speak French. I enjoy French culture, not least of which is French cooking. I have also worked for one of the French "state-controlled conglomerates" Vickers refers to in her article, including assignments in former French colonies.

It is with particular interest therefore that I watch Jacques Chirac basking in the limelight as a born-again peacenik, along with trusted adviser and foreign minister M. de Villepin. They have known for months that the United States will disarm Saddam and have once again made a strategic choice to protect their interests and their secrets.

Sadly for a Francophile, France, once ally in deed, then ally in name, is fast becoming no ally at all. France now appears to be attempting to reshape the post-9/11 world in its own favor, regardless of the consequences for others.

Let's face it—the French are smart. What's more, they like showing they are smart. Pay particular attention therefore if the French appear to make no sense at all. Take M. de Villepin, for example. His response to Secretary Powell's presentation at the U.N. was to request that Iraq pass legislation banning weapons of mass destruction. Absurd? Clever, actually. Saddam did it within the week.

Saddam listens to the French. He is taking his cues from them. As long as people hope for Saddam's conversion and he acts like he is converting, the French have leverage, with Saddam of course, but more importantly, with the U.N. and world opinion. The real reason having leverage in the U.N. matters at all, of course, is that the United States and United Kingdom have placed over 200,000 soldiers at Saddam's back.

Do not be fooled by the principled, olive branch approach, Chirac posturing as "World Leader for World Peace." It's soft power in the form of commercial advantages and public opinion that the French are after. And it's soft power they are getting for now.

Fortunately, Bush is ready to back up his convictions with force. He knows that terrorists acting as dictators must be disarmed before they destroy the innocent. The United States would rather be right than clever.

Not so the French. A French colleague often points out to me that France has the fourth largest economy in the world. Not bad, he says, for such a small country.

Then I remind him that California, taken alone, would be sixth.

Bon appétit, Saddam.

WALTER S. WITT
Paris, France

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TEAMING UP FOR DIGITAL RIGHTS

When people of goodwill come together, there is no limit to what they can achieve. For example, discussions between the technology and recording industries recently produced an unusual and persuasive consensus on how best to respond to the difficult policy challenges posed by digital piracy.

The music, movie, publishing and software industries lose billions of dollars in sales annually because of unauthorized copying and redistribution of their products. They all share an interest in reducing piracy, which hurts consumers by discouraging continued investment in new, creative work.

Some in the affected industries have called on government to require that computers and other digital devices incorporate technology to prevent copying. But many—including Microsoft—believe that specific technology mandates would be costly and ineffective. Our concern is that they would hobble consumers' lawful use of technology, and stifle the innovation that can ultimately make digital music, movies and other content both more secure and more available—legally.

These issues have been the focus of extensive discussions involving the leading technology and record companies, represented by three broad-based trade groups: the Recording Industry Association of America, the Computer Systems Policy Project and the Business Software Alliance.

These groups recently achieved breakthrough agreement on a set of policy principles. Noting that they have already collaborated to develop anti-copying technology used today in media and devices, they agreed that government mandates on how technology must work or be deployed are not practical, and not in the best interests of consumers or businesses.

The industry groups endorsed efforts to increase consumer awareness of the rights and wrongs of Internet use and digital copying. They expressed support for private and government sanctions against copyright infringers, and for technical measures to limit illegal distribution of copyrighted works—as long as those measures are reasonable, are not destructive to networks, data or equipment, and do not violate individuals' privacy or similar legal interests.

Fight piracy with consumer choice and industry innovation, not government-mandated technologies

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the weekly Standard

Game Over

Let's see where we stand. Over the past six months, while the United Nations has been debating the definition of words like "immediate" and "unconditional," the United States has deployed hundreds of thousands of troops around Iraq. It has done so smoothly, and without the terrorist counterattack that many feared.

The French effort to create a united European foreign policy opposed to U.S. policy has failed. French behavior has illustrated the divide between new and old Europe more clearly than anything Donald Rumsfeld could say. Central and Eastern Europeans now know who their natural allies are. The British governing class has absorbed a fresh lesson in French arrogance.

The U.N. has conspicuously failed to honor its own resolutions. President Bush challenged the body to finally give its judgments some weight. It has failed to do that, and the American public is well aware of this failure.

Domestically, public support for the president's policy remains strong. Clear majorities, including clear majorities of self-declared independent voters, support President Bush. Even among registered Democrats, there is a slight majority supporting regime change in Iraq.

All in all, this is not a terrible state of affairs. The president has remained resolute. Momentum to liberate Iraq continues to build. The situation has clarified, and history will allow clear judgments about which leaders and which institutions were up to the challenge posed by Saddam and which were not.

It's worth taking this step back to remind ourselves that things are still essentially on track, because over the past week it's been easy to feel distressed. The president, in his prime-time press conference, said he would put a second resolution on Iraq to a vote at the Security Council, regardless of the whip count. At the time, this decision seemed a blow for candor.

But then in the course of the ensuing days it all began to look like a backroom negotiation at the Chicago city council. The White House released photos of the president on the phone, pleading with nations such as Angola, as if that were supposed to impress anybody. Plans and counterplans were passed around, as if some diplomatic fudge could cover over the essential dispute. What had been intended as a let's-lay-our-cards-on-the-table moment became bogged down in diplomatic modality land. We learned once again that nobody spends a week in the belly of the United Nations and comes out looking clear and principled.

It was a bad exercise, generous (to Tony Blair) but inevitably futile. Still, it's over. The diplomatic dance of the past several days, and indeed the past months, will be soon forgotten. What matters is the underlying dispute that has shaped this issue from the beginning.

Over the past 12 years the United States has sought to disarm or depose Saddam—more forcefully since September 11 than before. Throughout that time, France and Russia have sought to undermine sanctions and fend off the ousting of Saddam. They opposed Clinton's efforts to bomb Saddam, just as they oppose Bush's push for regime change. Through the fog and verbiage, that is the essential confrontation. Events will show who was right, George W. Bush or Jacques Chirac.

We warned, when the administration first decided to take the U.N. route, that this could be a trap. In retrospect, things have gone better than we had any right to expect. Bush threw down a clear challenge before the body. Colin Powell was able to win unanimous support for Resolution 1441, which is a valuable document. The American people got to see their president giving a body he regards with skepticism a fair chance to confront Saddam. Many were impressed that Bush made the effort. They are less wary of his policy now than they were a few months ago.

It's possible to second-guess the U.N. venture in any number of ways. Maybe the United States should have walked away from the U.N. after Saddam's insulting weapons report in December. Maybe Bush should have anticipated that Russia would remain intransigent regardless of Bush's relationship with Putin. But second-guessing the last-minute diplomatic maneuvers leading up to a war is hardly a useful way to spend one's time.

What matters, and what ultimately sprang the U.N. trap, is American resolve. The administration simply wouldn't let up. It didn't matter how Hans Blix muddied the waters with his reports on this or that weapons system. Under the U.N. resolutions, it was up to Saddam to disarm, administration officials repeated ad nauseam, and he wasn't doing it. It was and is sheer relentlessness that has driven us to where we are today.

Which is ironic. We are in this situation because the first Bush administration was not relentless in its pursuit of Saddam Hussein. That is a mistake this Bush administration will not repeat.

—David Brooks, for the Editors

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The Path of More Resistance

Avoiding war with Iraq would have been the safer course for Bush. BY FRED BARNES

THE CYNICAL VIEW of President Bush is that he exploited the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, for political gain and now is ardently pursuing war with Iraq for the same reason. Many Democrats, including Senate minority leader Tom Daschle, believe this. It's true that Bush is stronger politically for having national security and not domestic issues as the focus of the nation's attention. But there's a political downside in the prolonged prelude to war, and the president is beginning to experience it. Six months of diplomacy at the United Nations Security Council, with no war resolution in sight, has taken a toll.

That Bush has persisted on Iraq in the face of sinking polls, diplomatic setbacks, and rising criticism argues against the cynical view. Thomas DeFrank of the New York *Daily News* reported last week that Bush told friends nearly a year ago that he'd concluded Saddam Hussein must be deposed. Since then, the president hasn't flinched. "He's using his political capital to take a reluctant nation to war," says a White House official. It's not the other way around—Bush taking the country to war to build political capital.

Let's not exaggerate. Bush has lost some ground politically, but he's not in freefall. The latest Gallup Poll showed approval of his performance dipped from 63 percent to 57 percent over the past two months. This brings Bush roughly back to where he was prior to September 11. The rally-around-the-president phenomenon usually vanishes in seven or eight months. With Bush, it took 18 months to disappear, and it's likely to return when war with Iraq begins.

The long road to war has created uncertainty about the future, and this is partly responsible for the weak economic recovery. Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, among others, says so. The vote by Turkey not to join the war, the opposition of France, Russia, and Germany, the troubles at the U.N.—all have shown the president as less than dominant. And not only have Bush's political opponents been emboldened, an antiwar movement has had time to mobilize, though less effectively in America than in Europe.

Norm Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute has a theory that winners win. That sounds tautological, but it means that winners create confidence in their ability to keep winning and thus improve their chances of doing just that. But lose or hit a roadblock, and the opposite occurs. "If you're not winning, you look vulnerable," Ornstein says. Rebuffs by allies and the U.N. "make Bush look less formidable. He looks not impotent but weaker."

There's something to this. Certainly Daschle and House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi and Democratic presidential candidates act as though they believe it. Their criticism of Bush has become frequent and harsh. They're encouraged by polls. Only 36 percent of Americans now say things are getting better in America, down from 46 percent in December. And the number of people who think the economy is in poor shape has nearly doubled (from 16 percent to 32 percent) over the past year.

Bush's political situation would no doubt be better today if he hadn't taken on Iraq, assuming Saddam hadn't used any of those weapons of mass destruction he claims he doesn't have. The president would be concentrating on a limited war on terrorism, aimed at al Qaeda. With two of the top five al Qaeda operatives captured or dead and Osama bin Laden possibly cornered and with no further terrorist attacks on American soil, "Bush's poll numbers would be sky high," insists a presidential adviser.

Maybe so, but Bush has chosen to take risks. He's allowed his schedule to be preoccupied by Iraq. He cancelled a luncheon with members of Congress last week to talk on the phone to British prime minister Tony Blair, who's nervous about losing support in Parliament. A few days earlier, while addressing a group of health care experts on Medicare reform, the president devoted the first 15 minutes to talking about Iraq.

Most striking of all, he's been willing to go to the U.N. and linger there to prove he's made every effort to avoid war. This seems to have assuaged few of his critics. Because Blair wants a new resolution declaring Saddam still in noncompliance with U.N. orders to disarm, Bush has gone along, even to the point of lobbying leaders of small, insignificant countries with Security Council seats, but with no stake in liberating Iraq or winning the war on terrorism.

The entire U.N. offensive now looks like a mistake, but an understandable one. It was Secretary of State Colin Powell's idea, but Bush made the decision. In their defense, neither Powell nor Bush could have known that France's opposition to serious Iraqi disarmament or regime change would be so hostile and implacable. At least Blair's support has been equally implacable.

All is hardly lost. In fact, not much has been lost. Bush hasn't pan-

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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SBC said they really, really needed "a coherent, preemptive federal broadband policy."[1]

SBC promised Congress that they would 'wire rural America' if they could get it.

SBC assured the FCC that it would result in billions in new network investments.

So the FCC took them up on their offer

and what is SBC doing?

Nothing except backing away from their promise to invest.[2]

SBC got what they wanted on broadband.

"Lehman Brothers analyst Steve Levy said the FCC decision freed the Baby Bells to make investments in broadband services."

Reuters, 2/21/03

Now they're backing out of their promise to invest.

"...James C. Smith, a senior vice president at telephone giant SBC Communications Inc., said the decision negated the benefits of the deregulation of broadband service. The ruling means that the phone companies have 'no additional incentive' to invest in new networks, he said, and they would not do so." *Washington Post, February 21, 2003*

Makes one wonder...

"'Considering the Bells got almost precisely the broadband relief they requested, relief they argued would lead to increased investment, their change of heart makes you wonder whether they really want to increase spending at this time,' said one Bush administration official who insisted on anonymity." *Washington Post, February 25, 2003*

...were they ever going to invest?

[1]SBC Release, 1/14/02; [2]"Bell Firms Pledge to Fight New FCC Rules", Washington Post, 2/25/03

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icked. Every report from the White House is that he's as firm as ever in his belief that Saddam must go and that Bush himself must make sure it happens. Rather than allies' encouraging Bush, it's been his task to buck them up when they've grown weary in warding off opposition at home. The weary include his two closest allies, Blair and Spanish prime minister Jose Maria Aznar.

The good news for Bush is that he still has considerable clout with the American public. Bush loathes press conferences, but he did well enough on March 6 that he changed public opinion. Backing for war and regime change increased. Better yet, the jump was exceeded by the national desire (up 15 percentage points in a Fox news survey) to stop dithering at the U.N. and start fighting. I suspect that is Bush's sentiment exactly. ♦

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Vox Ignoramus

On issues of war and peace, public opinion has proven an unreliable guide. BY MIKE MURPHY

MUCH OF THE RECENT DEBATE over the Bush administration's Iraq policy has centered on two foolish ideas. The first is that the goal of American foreign policy should be to make certain the United States is "liked" by as many other countries as possible, particularly at that great high school of the world, the United Nations. The second is that policymakers should look to public opinion in the United States and abroad as the compass by which to make wise decisions on vital matters of war and peace.

This theory of international relations as a dinner party where national interests should be subordinated to good manners is disturbingly ubiquitous among the chattering class. It is also very dangerous in our age of state-sponsored mass terror. Public opinion, while always sanctified when we talk about our great democracy, is often dangerously naive and ill-informed. History shows us that public opinion in times of grave national crisis often puts great pressure on leaders to do exactly the wrong thing.

Consider: In the fall of 1939 Adolf Hitler had already started the Second World War. Austria and Czechoslovakia had been conquered. Poland was falling to German armies. Britain and France had just declared war.

Against this, Gallup measured American public opinion on the European war. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 96 percent of Americans opposed joining the war against Hitler. But when asked if the United States should stay out of the war, even if that meant fascist Germany would conquer the democracies of England and France, 79 percent of Americans still said America should avoid the war.

This was public opinion in the United States after a decade of Hitler's ranting, re-arming, and marching across his neighbors' borders. Even as late as 1941, with France defeated and England alone, a poll showed 79 percent of Americans still opposed involvement in the war.

European public opinion was no wiser. Shortly after Chamberlain won peace in our time at Munich, only 39 percent of British public opinion opposed his policies. After losing millions in the slaughtering fields of the First World War, it is no surprise that France and England craved peace during the 1930s. Woodrow Wilson lured a reluctant America into that Great War with a promise that it would end all wars. The newspapers of the 1930s frequently terrified readers with stories of vast air armadas that would bomb crowded cities with poison gas. That public opinion would cling to peace at nearly any cost is easily understandable, and arguably commendable. No civilized society will ever embrace the horror of war if given any other option, even options that are illusions. But it is the duty of leaders to see through the illusions.

Hitler made his riskiest initial move in March 1936 by remilitarizing the Rhineland, and thereby dramatically repudiating the Treaty of Versailles. France's vastly superior army of the time could easily have rolled into the Ruhr valley, upholding the treaty that ended World War I and stopping Hitler's ambitions by dis-

Mike Murphy is a political and media consultant.

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arming his regime. Reacting to Hitler's gamble, France's caretaker premier Albert Sarraut made a snarling radio speech, weighed military action, and consulted his British allies in the Baldwin government, who told the French that Britain could not "accept the risk of war" and urged diplomatic action within the League of Nations.

Facing elections in May and fearing a backlash from a powerful "pacifist tornado," the Sarraut cabinet quickly rejected military action. "If we had declared a general mobilization two months before the elections," wrote Sarraut's air minister in 1944, "we would have been swept out of parliament by the voters, if it did not happen beforehand through a revolution in the streets." France, the dominant land power in Europe during the 1930s, did nothing.

Public opinion in most Western democracies today is pushing leaders against the use of military force. Only in the United States does public opinion support military action in Iraq, and that support is far from overwhelming. What has changed dramatically in the decades since World War II is the cost of a miscalculation. The great oceans that protected America from the blitzkriegs of 1939 and 1940 offer no protection against a crude atomic weapon in a cargo container. Acting too late against a deadly enemy would now be catastrophic. National leaders who face atomic terrorists cannot afford the luxury of hindsight.

Presidents often succeed in everyday politics by deftly following public opinion. Witness the recession-proof vitality of the political polling industry. A time comes, however, when protecting the public is far more important than catering to it. The highest duty of elected leaders at moments of critical national interest is to resist the impulses of the public mob with its many illusions, regardless of whether the mob is rushing toward angry violence or a naive peace. George W. Bush and Tony Blair are wise and brave to understand this. ♦

Bush's Grand Strategy

Iraq is one move in a bigger game.

BY JEFFREY BELL

THE FOCUS for the past six months on obtaining United Nations approval for the invasion of Iraq has obscured a simple, logical American strategy based on a clear premise. The premise is that the mass civilian killings of 9/11 triggered a world war between the United States and a political wing of Islamic fundamentalism, sometimes called Islamism.

This world war would not be happening on the scale it is were it not the case that the rise of Islamism is part and parcel of a convulsive upheaval destabilizing the billion-member world of Islam as well as neighboring countries and—at least potentially—countries with Islamic minorities. In a war of such reach and magnitude, the invasion of Iraq, or the capture of top al Qaeda commanders, should be seen as tactical events in a series of moves and countermoves stretching well into the future.

If this premise is true, then just about everything the Bush administration is doing makes sense. So do the actions and announcements of our various adversaries and non-well-wishers in this far-flung war.

The most shocking thing about 9/11 was the willingness of Islamists to carry out indiscriminate mass killing of noncombatant Americans. The attacks that day laid bare the desire of our enemies to obtain weapons of mass destruction to inflict vastly greater destruction on our country and people.

The day after 9/11, there existed four deeply anti-American rogue states, clearly open to helping Islamists achieve the mass murder of Americans. They were Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. The invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001 removed one of these four regimes. The coming invasion of Iraq will remove a second.

Is it any wonder that the two remaining anti-American rogue states are doing everything in their power to race toward clear-cut possession of nuclear weapons? Possession of nuclear weapons by these rogue states can serve two purposes. It can deter the United States from doing to them what we have done to the Taliban and are about to do to the Baath. And, if President Bush is as determined and implacable as they fear he is, it can keep the Islamist cause alive (Iran) and allow revenge (Iran and North Korea) in the face of the impending overthrow of their governments by military or other means. The vengeance they have in mind could be prospective and openly state-sponsored, or carried out later by Islamist terror networks in possession of weapons of mass murder as a last will and testament of the North Korean and/or Iranian regimes.

Not every U.S. adversary, not even every rogue state, is as clearly anti-American as Iran and North Korea. Libya and Syria, for example, have been repeatedly classified by the U.S. government as rogue states (or, in the term substituted by the Clinton administration, "states of concern"). Yet at least so far, it is unclear that they are inclined to collaborate with Islamists in the mass murder of Americans. As long as this continues to be the case, Syria, Libya, and other

Jeffrey Bell is a principal of Capital City Partners, a Washington consulting firm.

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states so situated are unlikely to become U.S. targets in the world war.

Neither are Russia and China, both of whom face unrest from Islamic minorities. The biggest danger to Russia's neutrality is not the Chechen revolt but the continued existence of thousands of nuclear weapons that could find their way to foreign Islamists. Economic growth under President Putin has somewhat lessened the purely mercenary motives for Russian-origin proliferation.

Similarly, China's greatest danger of unwanted involvement is not from Uighur unrest but its desire to have it both ways in its relationship to North Korea. China's rather inscrutable new leadership will have some important decisions coming along much sooner than it would prefer, thanks to the North Korean regime's accurate perception that its own moment of truth is rapidly approaching.

Of all the countries in this war's gray area, Pakistan and Turkey are the most complex and important. Early on, with some coercive encouragement from Secretary of State Colin Powell, Pakistan's Gen. Pervez Musharraf opted for an alliance with the United States, leaving him in an exposed position at home, including with elements of his own military. The decision of the Turkish parliament to reject direct involvement in the invasion of Iraq reflected similar tensions.

How to deal with such tensions in Islamic countries with governments friendly to Washington is the biggest unanswered question of the Bush strategy. Post-invasion Iraq will put the issue on our plate in an unavoidable way. In a nutshell, the argument is between occupiers and democratizers.

At first glance, the core administration premise—that this is a world war involving a vast internal crisis of Islam—suggests the necessity of long-term American occupation. In Turkey, after all, democracy was part of the problem. The only longstanding democracy in the Islamic world recently voted in a fundamentalist majority, and the same is likely to happen elsewhere, assuming the United States begins to achieve its long-term goal of democratizing the world of Islam. This argues for going slowly, and relying for now on MacArthur-style proconsuls in the wake of favorable regime change.

Peter Steiner

The counterargument is a bit counterintuitive, but appears to be gaining ground. In this view, Islam is more than the leading rival religion to Christianity. As politicized by such figures as Osama bin Laden and Iranian strongman Hashemi Rafsanjani, it is also the world's leading political alternative to Western-style democracy. Instituting democracy might feel like a setback in the short run, especially in terms of political rhetoric. But elected fundamentalist governments ultimately will be judged, at least in part, by how well they collect the garbage. In and of itself, introduction of a democracy that respects free speech and freedom of religion will begin the process of separating religion from politics in Islamic culture.

The fear of what democratization will do to Islam is, in this view, a big source of the rage Islamists feel toward the United States, and not toward France or Germany. We are the only democracy that treats political equality not just as a side effect of modernization, but as a universal moral imperative—one that takes precedence over religious conformity, among other things.

When Gen. Eric Shinseki, the Clinton-appointed Army chief of staff, recently told Congress that several hundred thousand American soldiers would be needed for the occupation of Iraq, he was quickly reprimanded by the White House and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. It was the clearest sign to date that Islamic democratization is close to being adopted as the final remaining piece of the Bush war strategy. ♦

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Showdown at the Voucher Corral

A high-stakes school board election in Milwaukee.

BY ELI LEHRER

MILWAUKEE SCHOOL BOARD member John Gardner has a deep voice, a short temper, plenty of enemies, and left-leaning political views. He also has a bevy of support from nationally prominent conservatives and is fighting a broad spectrum of left-wing forces that want to end his political career.

First elected as an at-large member to the board governing America's 12th largest urban school district in 1995, Gardner, a union organizer by profession, made a name for himself with outspoken (sometimes outrageous) rhetoric and passionate support for Milwaukee's ambitious school-choice experiments. He's always run on a nine-word platform: "Parents Choose Schools. Money Follows Students. Schools Make Decisions."

Thanks in large part to Gardner and his political allies, Milwaukee's parents have more options than those in any other large urban school district: Of 105,000 students in the district nearly 15,000 get publicly funded vouchers to attend private and religious schools, while a roughly equal number attend scores of new charter schools that have sprouted all over the lakeside city.

This reform era, however, may draw to a close with the April 1 election—the school-choice faction Gardner represents holds a 5-4 edge, but his reelection is in doubt. "John Gardner was the moral and intellectual heart of the school-choice movement in Milwaukee," says former Bradley Foundation president Michael Joyce, who devoted the foundation's resources to funding a large-scale Milwaukee voucher experiment in the early 1990s. "He's made real enemies from the teachers' union groups who regard him as, well, dangerous."

When he last ran for reelection in 1999, teachers' unions, People for the American Way (of which Gardner is a longtime member), and a host of other nationally organized leftist groups spent about $1 million to defeat him; very likely the most ever spent for a local school board race. They may surpass that amount this time. Gardner's opponent in the April 1 election—former high school principal Tom Balistreri—plans to run about a quarter-million dollars of television ads, Gardner says. Gardner has no money for television and has raised only a little more than he had at this time in 1999, when he and allied groups spent slightly under $200,000. In the February primary for the nonpartisan board, Balistreri beat Gardner by almost 1,000 votes out of 25,000 cast with about 2,000 going to a minister who has since endorsed Balistreri.

Whatever happens, Gardner will have a significant legacy. When he first became involved in city politics in the early 1990s, everyone agreed that Milwaukee's schools needed some sort of drastic change: Test scores were among the lowest in the nation while dropout rates (over 60 percent) ranked among the highest. Thanks to Gardner, the Bradley Foundation, and Democratic mayor John O. Norquist, Milwaukee launched an ambitious choice experiment to remedy this situation. Since reform began in earnest in 1994, mixed but mostly positive academic outcomes have emerged: Reading and language scores have risen significantly and dropout rates have fallen (although they remain abysmally high). More distressingly for diehard voucher opponents, Milwaukee's voucher program appears to have put to rest the idea that choice destroys public schools—the school district's enrollment has actually grown slightly and inflation-adjusted per-student spending has risen about a quarter.

But not all the news is good: Math scores in the public schools have risen slightly less than those elsewhere in the nation, 60 percent of African-American males fail to graduate from high school in four years, and improved parental choice has brought the greatest benefits to well-informed middle-class parents. "Milwaukee Public Schools is a great system if you're willing to get involved," says Rick Marino, a staunch Gardner supporter who has two children in Milwaukee charter schools. "But if you are not, your kids just get dumped in some central area." Still, efforts to undo the reforms have little popular support.

The lack of grass-roots opposition to the voucher plan may make the left most nervous. "This race shows that local school boards really matter to those who support school choice," says Ralph Benko, a Washington political consultant and longtime parent rights activist who serves as an adviser to Gardner's campaign. "Activists can gain a lot if they work hard to take them over." Stephen Moore, who heads the Club for Growth, says that the free-market group has never supported any candidate nearly as left-wing as Gardner. "They may be particularly afraid of him because he's a convert away from their cause."

For all the fixation on vouchers (Nobel laureate Milton Friedman has donated $3,000 to Gardner's campaign), it's not clear that they've made an enormous difference in Milwaukee. While Milwaukee has done well with vouchers, school districts

Eli Lehrer is senior editor of the American Enterprise.

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like Chicago and Wake County, North Carolina (which serves Raleigh-Durham), have shown similar or better student performance gains from voucher-less school reform schemes. One official evaluation in Milwaukee even showed that the vouchers made little or no difference (although most studies have shown positive effects). "It's difficult to separate the influence of vouchers from everything else that went on in Milwaukee," says Frederick Hess, an American Enterprise Institute scholar who has written a book on the Milwaukee school-choice experiment.

Gardner's opponents don't really want to talk about their plans regarding vouchers or, indeed, about anything else. Through a spokeswoman who would not give her name, Balistreri refused to comment on any issue related to the campaign. John Weigelt, who heads the Milwaukee principals' union, was the only prominent Balistreri supporter who would speak with me. He complains that Gardner has spent too much time looking for problems in the school system and figuring out how to get reelected. "The major job of a school board official ought to be to develop policy based on the recommendations of the school administrations," he says. "John Gardner is a meddler." Weigelt says that his union never asked Balistreri about vouchers during the endorsement process and that it wants all charter schools to be unionized.

A publicly distributed Balistreri campaign plan, however, describes Gardner as a voucher candidate and says the campaign against him will rely mostly on unions like Weigelt's Administrators and Supervisors Council. And Gardner doesn't get along very well with most school unions. He supports raising entry-level teacher pay and cutting back on the benefits for the long-timers who dominate the union hierarchy. Despite his tussles with unions, though, Gardner continues to work as an independent labor organizer. "I firmly believe that labor unions are one of the cornerstones of democracy," he tells me. "But that doesn't mean I favor warehousing of inner city youth."

Weigelt himself says that Milwaukee unions have "accepted lower salary increases for the sake of maintaining the quality of the health and retirement plans." At public forums, Balistreri pushes uncontroversial efforts to retain quality teachers, continue the district's work in improving reading scores, and make schools safer. But he won't say much else: The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* calls his plans "short on specifics."

So even though the election may turn out to be a critical one for the future of vouchers, Balistreri won't even talk about vouchers in public. Instead of attacking the choice movement head-on, teachers' unions and their supporters decided to attack the movement's leader. "Tom Balistreri is running a campaign on the idea that John Gardner is divisive," says Gardner. "And, actually, he's right about that." ♦

Michael Ramirez

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Hypocrisy at the U.N.

But we repeat ourselves.

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

LAST DECEMBER, in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, former President Jimmy Carter linked the United States' responsibility to lead the world in implementing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, passed last November, more than a decade after Iraq's unlawful invasion and annexation of Kuwait, to its responsibility to implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, passed in November 1967, five months after the Six Day War.

Making the rounds these days—at scholarly conferences, in liberal churches, and of course throughout European capitals—is a version of this linkage that accuses the United States of rank hypocrisy: Where does the Bush administration, the accusation runs, get off suggesting that the U.N. Security Council authorizes U.S. use of military force to disarm Saddam Hussein? After all, the accusers say, like previous U.S. administrations for more than 35 years, the Bush administration displays contempt for the United Nations and for international law by failing to compel Israel to comply with Resolution 242, which, the accusers maintain, requires Israel to immediately withdraw from all the territories it seized in 1967. The accusation is bogus.

Resolution 242 stands on an entirely different footing from 1441. Resolution 242 affirms the need for negotiations based on two mutually dependent principles, consistent with the U.N. Charter, that should govern the establishment of "a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security." It does not articulate the concrete terms that constitute such a peace.

The first principle affirms that peace depends on Israel's withdrawing "from territories occupied in the conflict." It does not, as is commonly asserted (including by Carter last December in Oslo), require Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders. Which territories and the extent of the withdrawal are questions 242 deliberately leaves open.

The second principle, which 242 links to the Israeli obligation to withdraw, requires of the Palestinians and other states in the region "termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

Much can be said about the obstacles to implementing 242 created over the years by Israeli settlement policy. But no serious conclusions can be drawn that overlook the obstacles to peace created by the policies of the Palestinians and states in the region that long remained, or remain today, at war with Israel. In July 1968, in open and flagrant rejection of 242, Yasser Arafat's Palestine National Council presented to the world the "Palestine National Charter." It called for "the retrieval of Palestine and its liberation through armed struggle." The odious provisions of the Palestinian National Charter that called for the destruction of Israel were not formally revoked until 1996. They live on in the battle cry of Palestinian youth in and out of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist organizations. They reflect Syrian state policy. The continuing war against Israel has been as massive an obstacle as there is to full implementation of 242.

The accusation that the United States has somehow failed in its obligations arising out of 242 is false. Resolution 242 makes no demands whatsoever on the United States. Moreover, from the successful 1978 Camp David meetings between Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat presided over by Jimmy Carter, to the failed 2000 Camp David meetings between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat presided over by Bill Clinton, and right up through the Bush administration's various undertakings in the spring of 2001, every American president has sought to broker a peace between Israel and the Palestinians and the states in the region, and has done so on the basis of the principles set forth in 242.

In contrast to 242, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441 (like 16 previous resolutions following Saddam's unlawful 1990 invasion of Kuwait) issues to Iraq utterly unambiguous orders. Declaring that since 1991 Saddam has been in "material breach" of his legal obligations to furnish "accurate, full, final, and complete disclosure" of his weapons of mass destruction and prohibited ballistic missiles, to provide to the U.N. inspectors "immediate, unconditional, and unrestricted access" to these weapons, and to disarm and destroy them, 1441 gives Saddam one last chance to comply. Emphatically rejecting half measures and partial compliance, 1441 provides that failure to immediately disclose his weapons and to completely disarm "shall constitute a further material breach of Iraq's obligations," and will cause Iraq to face "serious consequences."

Thanks to Hans Blix's reports and Colin Powell's February 5 address to the Security Council, everybody knows that Saddam has failed to

Peter Berkowitz teaches at George Mason University School of Law and is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

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cooperate immediately and completely with the U.N. inspectors, and so is in further and continuing material breach of his obligations under international law. And everybody knows that under 1441 such material breach triggers "serious consequences," a euphemism for the use of military force to separate the ruthless dictator from his forbidden arsenal.

Jimmy Carter was right. Resolutions 242 and 1441 are linked. Those who seek to enforce one and disregard the legal requirements imposed by the other are indeed guilty of hypocrisy. The United States, however, is not one of those countries. It has rightly and repeatedly sought to promote negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians, and states in the region on the basis of the principles of Resolution 242. And in contrast to the folly and fecklessness of other members of the Security Council, the United States has sought to enforce the unambiguous, nonnegotiable, and legally binding imperatives contained in Resolution 1441. ♦

Legal Malpractice

Will Congress side with the lawyers or the doctors? BY WILLIAM TUCKER

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE reform is moving steadily through Congress. The House passed President Bush's plan last Thursday, and it now goes to the Senate. The administration is hoping the reforms will head off a national malpractice crisis, which has already closed emergency rooms and trauma centers in Philadelphia and Las Vegas and sent doctors out on strike in Texas, West Virginia, and New Jersey. Obstetricians are particularly affected by rising premiums for malpractice insurance, and in many states it is getting difficult to find doctors who will deliver babies.

The Help Efficient, Accessible, Low-cost, Timely Healthcare Act (some people will do anything for an acronym) gives the president just about everything he wanted: a $250,000 cap on non-economic "pain-and-suffering" damages; a limit on punitive damages at two times economic damages; a three-year statute of limitations on complaints; damage payments apportioned by actual negligence; disclosure to juries of other sources of compensation to injured plaintiffs, such as their insurance coverage; and a limit on lawyers' contingency fees to 15 percent of damages above $600,000.

The limits on non-economic and punitive damages will discourage lawyers from escalating routine cases into the multi-multi-million-dollar range. The three-year statute prevents older children and adults from coming back and claiming birth trauma. The apportioning of damage claims counteracts that masterpiece of legal legerdemain by which a deep pocket with 1 percent of the liability can be made to pay 100 percent of the damages.

Supporters point to California's $250,000 cap on non-economic damages, adopted in 1976, which reduced the number of million-dollar verdicts to 60 percent of the national average. "Since 1976 malpractice premiums have increased only 168 percent in California versus 505 percent nationwide," says Gretchen Schaefer of the American Tort Reform Association.

Trial lawyers counter that the California law had no impact until state voters capped insurance premiums in 1988. They also argue that the current national crisis is the result of bad investments by the insurance industry. "Premiums were flat or went down from 1990 until 2000," says Carlton Carl, spokesman for the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. "Then the stock market tanked. Now the insurance companies are trying to raise premiums to cover their losses. All caps will do is penalize the most seriously injured victims of malpractice."

Of course that argument also works the other way. "The relatively flat malpractice premiums of the 1990s were partially subsidized by gains from the insurance companies' stock and bond portfolios," says Robert Wegman, chief economist for the Insurance Industry Institute. "The real problem is that malpractice costs have risen 140 percent since 1990 while medical costs have risen only 60 percent. In the end, gains from investment couldn't make up the difference."

In 1995, insurers paid out 99.7 cents for every $1 they took in malpractice premiums. Today payouts have risen to $1.65 per $1, the highest in history. "You have to remember, more than half the doctors in this country buy malpractice insurance from non-profit companies run by doctors themselves," says Wegman. "Even those companies can't make it."

Lawyers charge the medical industry is rife with malpractice. They have publicized the case of a Minnesota woman who had both breasts wrongly removed because of a mix-up in biopsies. They also cite the 2002 Harvard Medical Practice Study, which attributed 98,000 annual deaths to medical mistakes. The death of Jésica Santillán, the 17-year-old girl given a wrong heart-and-lung transplant in February, has alone affected the debate.

"The real problem is lack of disciplining by state medical boards," says Sidney Wolfe, of Ralph Nader's Public Citizen Health Research Group. "Among the three states with the most serious insurance crises—West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York—all have high percentages of doctors with five or more malpractice payments against them."

Yet the key question is whether astronomical damage awards are mak-

William Tucker is a columnist for the New York Post.

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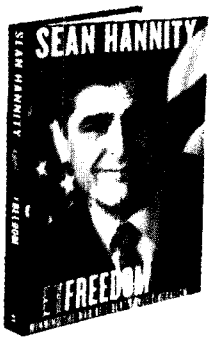

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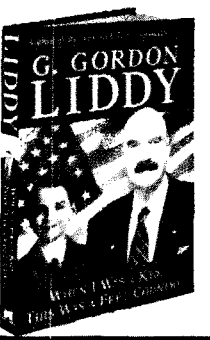

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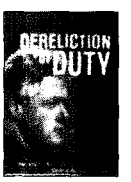

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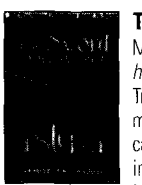

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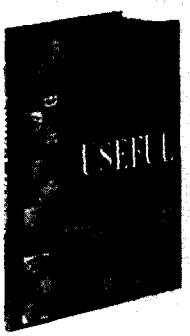

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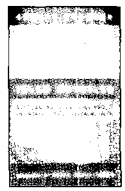

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ing the medical system any better. In theory, large awards should encourage doctors and hospitals to clean up their mistakes. But that's only true if the awards coincide with actual blunders and incompetence. In practice, the distribution of awards has been much more arbitrary.

Perhaps the best example is cerebral palsy, the neurological malfunctioning that accounts for nearly 60 percent of all malpractice payouts. Infants with cerebral palsy develop very little muscular control and are often unable to nurse. They remain incontinent and are wheelchair-bound throughout their lives. Most victims survive into adulthood. Each year there are about 10,000 new cases—about 3 per 1,000 births. Estimated lifetime cost of care is $1-to-$5 million.

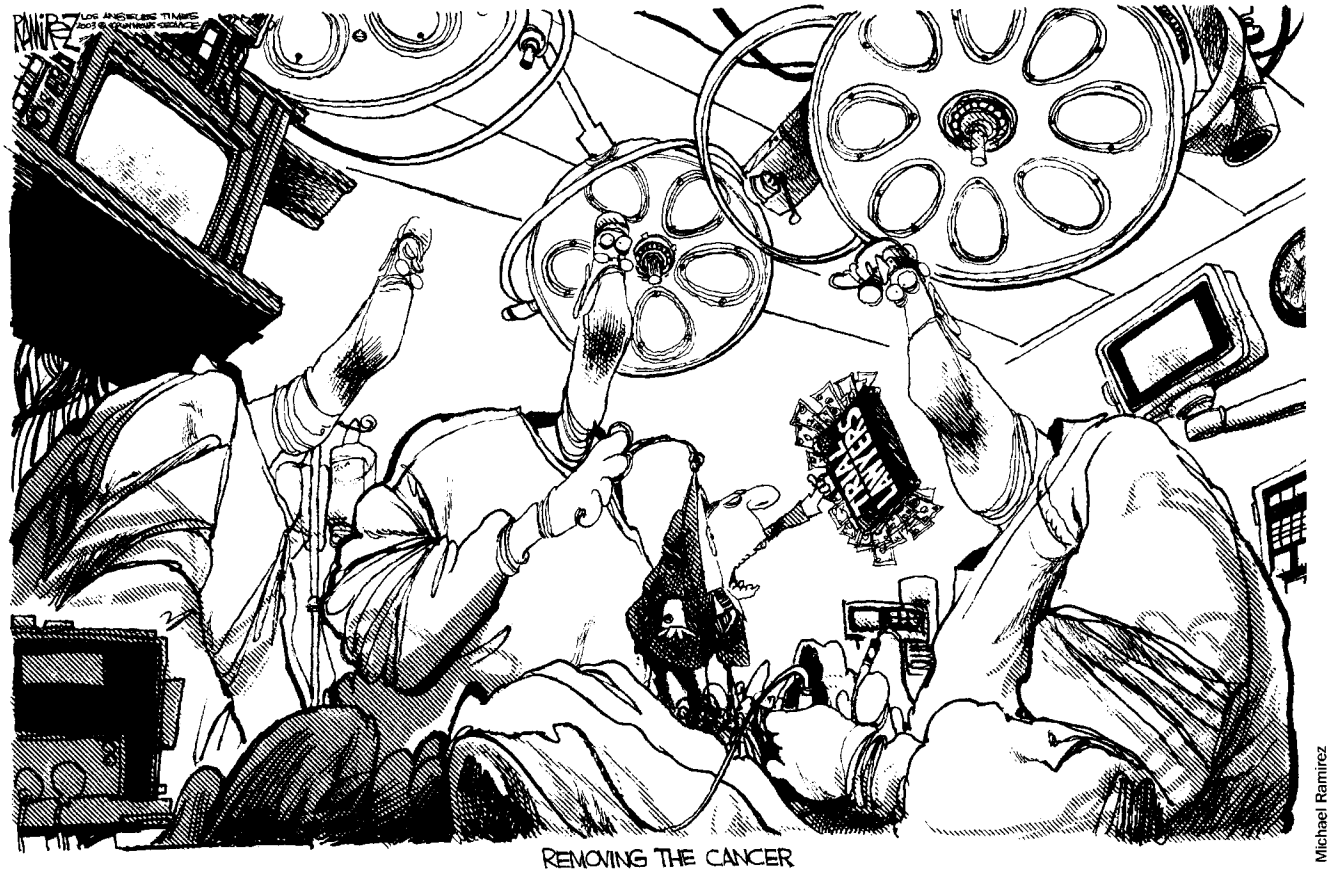
The causes of cerebral palsy are still unknown. Among the suspected factors are a genetic condition (the best indicator is mental retardation in the mother); an autoimmune reaction in the fetus; neural damage caused by an infection during pregnancy; and some trauma sustained during a difficult delivery. Premature babies and infants that experience difficult births are often stricken. Yet whether birth problems are the *cause* of cerebral palsy or whether they are a *symptom* that the infant *already has* the disease has never been established.

Wielding the customary "junk science" of the courtroom, plaintiff's attorneys have nonetheless managed to convince judges and juries that doctors' mistakes are *the* problem. By wheeling severely disabled victims into the courtroom and lining up maverick "experts" willing to testify against the medical consensus, lawyers have won case after case before sympathetic juries. The average obstetrician is now sued twice in his or her career. One Brooklyn jury recently awarded $90 million in a cerebral palsy case.

"We sit by our patients making minute-to-minute decisions, always trying to do what is right," says Dr. Bonnie Eilen, a Westchester county obstetrician. "Sometimes, you are just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and no matter who delivered that child it would have had the problem. Yet our nurses have to spend countless hours combing over medical records preparing for lawsuits instead of tending patients. I love my profession but I hate the business."

As a defensive strategy, doctors now perform Caesareans in 25 percent of all births (up from only 3 percent in the 1970s). Yet the incidence of cerebral palsy has not declined one iota. In fact it is actually higher, since improved medical strategies help more premature infants survive. Despite the tidal wave of malpractice suits over the past 25 years, America's rate of cerebral palsy has remained exactly the same as in Europe, Canada, and Japan.

As the Senate debate begins, it is the trial lawyers who will at last be on trial. Are malpractice suits really doing anything to improve health care, or are they a cynical way of capitalizing on human tragedy? ♦



REMOVING THE CANCER

Michael Ramirez

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Why We Need a Democratic Iraq

In the long run, democracy may be the only effective defense against the disease that struck us on 9/11.

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

In Europe, the United States, and the Middle East, it has become commonplace to hear doubts, if not derision, expressed about the wisdom of the Bush administration's abetting the creation of a democratic Iraq. Most of the folks who think Iraqi democracy a lame idea are of course also opposed to the war, and would no doubt be against it even if they thought Iraq's various people—Shia and Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, and Christians—could form a democratic union. If the Iraqi people had had a long, glorious parliamentary tradition before Saddam Hussein, liberal antiwar critics like Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (a tenacious supporter of Chinese dissidents) might be a little less quick to suggest that this war would be immoral. Critics such as former national security advisers Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski would of course have no such problem. Among the antiwar "realists," stability and the comity of leaders are the beginning and end of foreign affairs. The coming war in Iraq has already proven too unsettling to the world order they know and love.

But one can also detect even on the pro-war side an anxiety about America's assuming a serious democratic *mission civilisatrice* in the Middle East. There has been a distinct carefulness in the language of many senior Bush administration officials whenever the "d-word" comes up. The boldness of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz—"If we commit . . . forces, we're not going to commit them for anything less than a free and democratic Iraq"—has not often been repeated. Do a Lexis-Nexis search for the words "democracy" and "Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld," and you will see that Rumsfeld appears more comfortable juxtaposing "free" or "liberated" with Iraq.

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*

Parsing the sentences of senior administration officials, of course, can be misleading and unfair. Until the presidential speech on February 26 at the American Enterprise Institute's annual dinner, President Bush had not clearly and forcefully put his mandate behind the democratic franchise in a post-Saddam Iraq. And even in that speech the president seemed careful not to overuse the word, preferring to describe an Iraqi society liberated from totalitarian crimes rather than one primed by America to enjoy the freedoms unique to democracies. Such distinctions are indeed quite similar to those made by many pro-American Iraqi exiles, who believe the United States' primary role is to liberate them from tyranny, not to instill in them democratic virtues or monitor for long those virtues' postwar application.

And any reservations senior U.S. officials may have about deeply committing America to the implantation of democracy in Iraq will likely be reinforced by the worker-bees at the State Department and the Pentagon, who will be directly responsible for policy on the ground. Foggy Bottom, which has never been wild about the war, does not appear to be bubbling with enthusiasm about the possibilities for the Arab world's first democracy. Our traditional "allies" in the Arab world—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan—aren't fans of this war, and State naturally absorbs the reservations of the officials with whom it deals. American diplomacy always inclines toward preserving the status quo, and the Bush administration since 9/11 has adopted an approach to the Middle East—the Axis of Evil doctrine, the War on Terrorism, and the advocacy of greater individual liberty and democracy—that is enormously unsettling to the dictators and kings of the region, particularly to those aligned with us. Also, bureaucrats naturally think more about the problems and potential blame, than about the potential glory, that attaches to any situation. And it is easy to imagine what could go wrong in Iraq.

The Pentagon's brass has similar biases and concerns, in addition to worrying about soldiers' getting killed by

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Iraqis displeased with the postwar political order. And to the extent that the Central Intelligence Agency will play a role, particularly a policy role, in a liberated Iraq, its preferences will likely be even more undemocratic. In the early 1990s, the CIA threw its weight behind the coup-plotters of the Iraqi National Accord, an opposition group rich in ex-military men. The INA's coup d'état fell apart in 1996, but the CIA's preference for the organization—for hard-nosed military types over democratic dreamers—remained. Though central intelligence director George Tenet may be in favor of a democratic Iraq, the foreign contacts and inclinations of the clandestine service, to which Tenet is always attentive, will probably work distinctly the other way.

In other words, the soldiers, diplomats, and spooks may well fight a rearguard action against the president's vision of a democratic Iraq, and the usual countervailing forces higher up, particularly within the civilian leadership of the Pentagon, may not decisively weigh in against the skeptics, because they, too, may have debilitating doubts. A "Free-Officer" governing council of anti-Saddam military men may start to look like the ideal provisional government—and we will soon discover that the entire Iraqi army, especially at the senior levels, is composed of anti-Saddam patriots. Such an arrangement would allow the Americans to leave quickly—and senior administration officials keep hinting that they really would like to be out of Iraq within "months, not years."

When the U.S. armed forces demolish the Iraqi officer corps, Washington will irretrievably destroy the old Ottoman political order, under which Sunni Arabs rule and Shia Arabs acquiesce.

In theory, this arrangement wouldn't abort the ultimate democratic objective, particularly if such a council included well-known pro-democracy civilians, and the "Free Officers" issued heartfelt pro-democracy proclamations. Hoping for the best, America could depart, confident that it had left Iraq a vastly better place (true) and that it had allowed the Iraqi people, or at least more than one of them, to determine the country's political future (also true). Privately, if not publicly, many within the administration—and the realpolitik crowd outside in America, Europe, and the Middle East—would be enormously relieved, believing Washington had actually left Iraq and the Middle East in a stable state, certainly more stable than it was with Saddam Hussein in power. America might not actually have left Iraq "free and democratic," but the administration could plausibly argue that it had *really* only promised to put Iraq "on the road to democracy." The *New York Times*'s Thomas Friedman and the *Washington Post* might huff and puff, but it's hard to see the antiwar Democrats in Congress getting much traction on the issue. Final score: realpoliticians 1, neoconservative democratic idealists 0.

There are, however, two main problems with a scenario along these lines. First, it's a decent bet that President Bush will not go along with it. He will have bucked the bureaucracies to go to war in Iraq, particularly the Department of State. He could well buck them again if they start to make arguments for a withdrawal from Iraq before it is evident that democratic institutions have a fighting chance there. The Reaganite evolution of George W. Bush since 9/11 suggests that the president sees "regime change" in Iraq in a profoundly philosophical way. If so, then pro-democracy Iraqi exiles who want the United States to transfer power to them prematurely, and senior U.S. officials who want to exit Iraq within months, have already lost their battles.

Second, and more important, advancing democracy in Iraq is the only way Washington can avoid that which the realpoliticians most fear: instability, or the "Lebanonization of Iraq." This is so primarily for one reason. When the U.S. armed forces demolish or dissolve the Republican and Special Republican Guards corps, Washington will irretrievably destroy the old Ottoman political order in Mesopotamia, under which Sunni Arabs rule and Shia Arabs acquiesce. In modern Iraq, 60 to 65 percent of the population has humbled itself before 20 percent of the population. Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini sought, in part, to overturn this age-old Sunni-Shia arrangement—what Johns Hopkins professor Fouad Ajami has called "the social contract of the Arab world"—in his war of revenge and liberation against Saddam Hussein in the 1980s. Khomeini failed because his Revolutionary Guards could not overcome Saddam's Republican praetorians.

The United States will have no such problem. When the Republican Guards crack apart, the Shia quiescence in Iraq, which has lasted since the British put down the Shia-led "revolution of 1920," will be over. (It in fact briefly ended in 1991, when the southern Shia region of Iraq led the rebellion against Saddam. When American tanks race through this Shia heartland on their way to Baghdad in the coming Gulf War, the defecting Shia Arab soldiers will likely pick up where their dead brothers stopped in 1991.)

The deconstruction of Baathist Iraq's officer corps, which is overwhelmingly Sunni in its upper reaches, will follow, assuming Washington doesn't try to intervene and save it. If Washington does do this—in the mistaken belief that the Iraqi officer corps is essential to preserve law and

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AFP / Behrouz Mehri

Iraqi opposition leaders (l-r) Ahmad Chalabi, Abdulaziz al-Hakim of the SCIRI, and Kurdistan Democratic party leader Masood Barzani, with U.S. special representative to the Iraqi opposition Zalmay Khalilzad.

order in the country, or because surrounding "allied" Arab Sunni states beg it to—it's a good bet that U.S. officials will unleash the internecine strife they most fear. Any transitional government in Iraq that includes as its core Sunni military officers, be they native "Free Officers" or returning exiles, will likewise probably light the fuse of Shia Arab resentment. Violent resistance is sure to follow.

In other words, Washington must advance a democratic arrangement whereby the Shias can assume a political and military role that their numbers and social, cultural, and commercial prominence have long warranted. The Kurds, who have been even more abused than the Shias under Baathist rule, are also much more likely to respect a democratic regime that diminishes the power of the Sunni Arabs who've been lording it over them for decades. They will be much more likely to begin the integration, however slow and fitful, of their independent militias into a national army when they see that the Sunni Arab officer corps has been gutted and that Kurdish military men may aspire to high rank. The United States ought to ensure that Kurdish officers become senior officers as quickly as possible in any reconstituted Iraqi army. Ditto for the Turkomans and Christians. Ditto of course for the Shias.

The Sunni Arabs as a bloc may object to any democratic arrangement that so reduces their authority. The habit of authority is centuries old among them. Their habit of abusive use of power dates back way before the coming of the Baath and Saddam Hussein in 1968. Yet, the Sunnis too have been terrorized by Saddam's totalitarianism. They know how he successfully attempted to keep their loyalty by playing the minority-solidarity card. They must surely fear that the Kurds and the Shias—especially the latter, who live among them in greater numbers throughout much of Iraq, including Baghdad—will want revenge for the years of Saddam's barbarism.

Denied control of the Iraqi military—which in its rank and file is majority Shia—the Sunni Arabs will have nowhere to turn for protection but to a vigorous democratic, federal system that protects minority rights and allows them considerable control of their lives in areas where they predominate. In a post-Saddam Iraq, the Sunni Arabs could well be among the most committed democratic-nationalists, underscoring the Iraqi identity over ethnic and religious loyalties. The United States should encourage them to move in this direction by superannuating the senior grades (try colonel and up) in the officer corps, and massively shrinking the size of the army, which has preyed on civilian rule throughout the modern history of the country.

Iraq's awful modern history is working in Washington's favor. The country's Shia Arabs do not yet have a ruling identity (they will, of course, quite quickly acquire a rebellious one). The Shia urban classes have never thought of themselves as rulers. Shia artists and intellectuals, who have greatly defined Iraq's culture, at least those bits of it not pulverized by Saddam, don't yet have any pretensions or post-Saddam grand designs. Intellectually, the diaspora may well own the Iraqi mind, and that diaspora appears to have reasonably strong democratic reflexes.

The main Shia religious institutions in Iraq, meanwhile, are in terrible shape, battered by Saddam's secret police for decades. They, too, will have to figure out who they are and who are their flock. Their centuries-old aversion to politics, which was integral to their traditional faith and demanded by their Sunni overlords, may come to an end, perhaps quite quickly. Yet it is by no means clear that a return of political activism among the Shia, last seen during the 1920 rebellion against the British, would lead to fundamentalism or other dictatorship-friendly beliefs. The Iraqi Shia clergy were in the past an intellectually diverse group. That diversity will probably return, and with it serious debate about the propriety and purposes of political Islam. There may well be few Iraqi clerics who would want

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to emulate clerical Iran, where mullahs no longer are esteemed by the common man.

Nor is it clear that the radical Shia groups that defied Saddam's rule—principally the clandestine guerrilla Dawa organization inside Iraq and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) headquartered in Tehran—will have significant followings in Iraq once Saddam is gone.

In sum, the Shia Arab identity is in flux. It could become democratic or dictatorial. The United States and its Iraqi friends—and among the truest of these is the Shia exile Ahmad Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress, the leading Iraqi pro-democracy umbrella group—have an enormous opportunity to encourage the Iraqi Shia Arabs to make the right choice. If they do so, no other force in Iraq, or outside the country, will likely have the strength to fell Iraqi democracy.

And on a grander scale, "the social contract of the Arab world" will no longer imply the domination of one people, one political party, one tribe, or one family over others. This is certainly the best, and may be the only effective, defense against the disease that struck us on 9/11. And if the administration is worried about the imminent prospect of clerical Iran's going nuclear, it ought to do all it can to ensure that the Shia Arabs lead the way to Iraqi democracy. A democratic Iraq could conceivably accelerate a similar spirit inside Shia Iran, where the ruling clergy has so far successfully corralled the desire for freedom. If the Iranians, who consider themselves vastly superior to the Iraqis, look westward toward a successful democratic experiment, they may react with widespread shame and hope—for Iranians, essential revolutionary ingredients. Washington has very few non-military options for preempting a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic in Iran. It shouldn't waste this one.

Nothing transcendent will ever come from Iraq, however, unless Washington takes the mundane preliminary step of destroying the current Iraqi officer corps. There are many other things that the United States must to do to clear the road to Iraqi democracy, but none is more essential or urgent. If the Bush administration attempts to leave Baghdad before finishing this task—and it seems naive to believe that the officer corps and army can be purged and rebuilt in "months"—then the odds are good that modern Iraq's sad, violent history will not end with the death of Saddam Hussein. We can be certain that Iraq, and the rest of the Middle East, will make us pay again in blood and tears for our fear of overturning the old order. ♦

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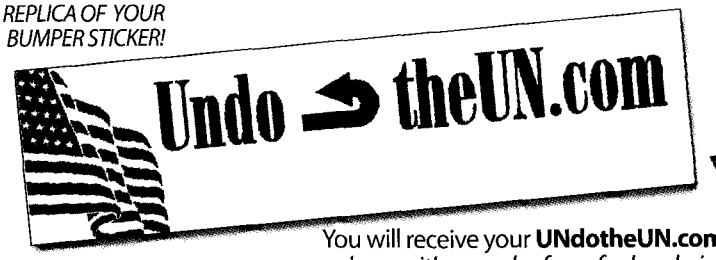

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Fear Not the Shias

Their tradition recognizes the rights of minorities, because they have always been a minority.

By Stephen Schwartz

New York

Sheikh Fadhel Al-Sahlani, an Iraqi American and president of the largest Shia Muslim congregation in North America, speaks perfect English. He sits with quiet dignity in his mosque, the Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Center in Queens, New York. Middle aged and slender, with a neat salt-and-pepper beard, he is draped in robes and wears a turban. Yet his words are anything but alien—rather, they are startlingly direct, articulate, and even familiar, at least to supporters of President George W. Bush and his vision for the future of the Middle East.

"The problem in Arab countries is simple," Sheikh Al-Sahlani says. "We are ruled by dictators. We want this to end. I cannot trust any Arab regime," he continues. "None of them has ever helped us. They did not accept Iraqi refugees after the [Gulf] war, except for some who were admitted to Syria. Only America helped us by taking in many refugees, and now there are thousands of us here. Only America really helped us," he repeats. "If the United States removes Saddam's fascist regime, I will support them. But also, we live here and we are loyal."

I told Sheikh Al-Sahlani how much his comments resembled those of President Bush himself and of Paul D. Wolfowitz, deputy defense secretary and point man for the strategy of regional transition to democracy. He nodded, with a smile. "We understand them," he said. He described the impact of Wolfowitz's recent visit to Iraqis living in Dearborn, Michigan, and said, "Many believe a change in American policy has come."

A week before, in a Manhattan restaurant, I'd heard a similar message from another Iraqi-American religious figure, Sheikh Kedhim Sadiq Mohammed of the Islamic Guidance Center, a Shia mosque in Brooklyn that serves a large Hispanic, African-American, and Arab-American community. "I am telling all the Arabs the moment has come to support the United States, to see the end of this evil dictatorship in Iraq," he said. "Many of them do not know how to react, but I am telling them to trust the Americans. I am an American citizen and I am loyal to President Bush."

I interviewed Sheikh Al-Sahlani on the night of March 9, after the annual Shia religious procession in midtown Manhattan, called to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein ibn Ali, grandson of the prophet Muhammad, at the battle of Kerbala—the defining event in the history of the Shia sect. (I had been invited to address the gathering.) Following the procession, in the main hall of the Al-Khoei mosque, a Pakistani-American medical doctor and religious teacher of great eloquence, Sakhawat Hussain, described the events at Kerbala, in which Imam Hussein and a small party of his supporters were killed at the order of tyrants who had seized control of the Muslim community.

The battle of Kerbala occurred in the year 680. Yet as Dr. Hussain preached to a gathering of hundreds that evening in Queens, grown men wailed at the evocation of Imam Hussein's death and the slaying of his infant son in his arms as if it had happened yesterday. Young men came forward bare to the waist, and began rhythmically beating their breasts in grief at the bloodshed so many centuries past.

Kerbala is located in Iraq, where the majority of the population—up to 65 percent—are Shia Muslims. For Shias, the drama that took place at Kerbala so long ago is emblematic of a struggle that persists throughout history, but never with greater resonance than now. In the Iraqi dictator Saddam, the Shias see the latest successor to Yezid, the evil ruler who ordered the murders of Imam Hussein and his partisans. The Iraqi Shias and their clerics again and again strive to defend truth, justice, and Islam cleansed of tyranny and terror.

The March 9 procession brought 10,000 Shia Muslims from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut into the streets of the Big Apple, behind a banner denouncing Saudi-backed Wahhabism, the extremist dispensation that has encouraged the mass murder of Shia Muslims for two and a

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Stephen Schwartz is the author of The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror *and director of the Islam and Democracy Program at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies.*

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half centuries, and which underpins the hellish discrimination Shias suffer today in the Saudi kingdom. Shias are the majority in the oil-bearing Eastern Province and the southern border region of Saudi Arabia. The banner named the cruelest enemies of innocent Muslims: Saddam, Mullah Omar, and bin Laden.

The parade ended at the Pakistani mission to the United Nations, on the East Side, where Istafa Naqvi, a Shia community leader, passionately denounced Saddam and proclaimed that U.S.-led forces would remove him. Naqvi invoked the American eagle, with its sharp claws, which he envisaged tearing the head off "the worst dictator in the world." Agha Jafri, the main Shia leader in New York, cried, "President Bush, why are you waiting? We want you to liberate Kerbala!" Fox News and a couple of network television outlets picked up the story of Muslims marching against tyranny and terrorism in downtown Manhattan. But the print media, even conservative dailies like the *New York Post* and the *New York Sun* that had reported on the anti-terror stance of Shia Muslims in the past, ignored the event.

This decision is understandable. To some reporters, the parade no doubt seemed a typical New York ethnic observance, colorful but irrelevant to the broader public. But in the aftermath of September 11, we can little afford to neglect Muslim voices raised against terrorism. The simple truth, recognized by every Shia community and religious leader in America, is that the Shia Muslims suffer from a terrible public image. Shias are labeled wholesale in the Western media, and in the high circles of the State Department, as suicide bombers. This problem dates, naturally, from Khomeini's revolution in Iran in 1979 and the seizing of U.S. hostages, an unhealed wound in the minds of most Americans. For the New York print media, as well as the functionaries at State, sorting out the differences among Iraqi Muslims, and moving past the shallow assumption that all Arab Muslims are anti-American, is too big a job. In recent weeks, anti-Shia propaganda has emerged as a staple of the liberal media, full of dire predictions that the fall of the Butcher of Baghdad will result in Iraq's being torn apart, as Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds fight each other for power.

According to the naysayers, an unreformed and irredeemable Iran stands behind all Shias everywhere, and is prepared to impose a new extremism in post-Saddam Iraq. Incompetent voices at the State Department proclaim the need to back old, exhausted politicians, who will presumably serve as pliable tools, in preference to Shia leaders like Ahmad Chalabi, of the Iraqi National Congress, and his secularist ally Kanan Makiya, author of *Republic of Fear* and the intellectual conscience of the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi Shias in America firmly deny that they are agents of Iranian reactionaries. They are ethnically Arab—not Persian, like the Iranians—as they never tire of pointing out. And unlike certain Iranians, they are inclined to forgive America—even for its disgraceful betrayal of 1991, when, in the aftermath of the Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush incited the Shias to rise up, then had the U.S. military stand aside as Saddam's forces slaughtered them.

Iraqi Shias look forward not to a clerical regime, but to a federal, constitutional Iraq in which all communities enjoy equal rights. After two years of discussions, they recently produced a major document, the *Declaration of the Shia of Iraq* (see *www.defenddemocracy.org*). The signatories "believe that Iraq can only be reviv[ed] if its future is based on the three principles of democracy, federalism, and community rights." The text itself summarizes the demands of the Shias as: "1. The abolition of dictatorship and its replacement with democracy; 2. The abolition of ethnic discrimination and its replacement with a federal structure for Kurdistan; 3. The abolition of the [Saddam] policy of discrimination against the Shias." In describing the political future of Iraq, it calls for "a democratic, parliamentary, constitutional order, that carefully avoids the hegemony of one sect or ethnic group," and "a single citizenship for all Iraqis." In addition, it proposes a healthy basis for the new Iraqi order: "a civil society and its community bases."

Regarding the Iranian "threat" to the new Iraq, Khomeini has been dead for 14 years, and "Khomeinism" is slowly but surely passing away before our eyes, as the new generation in Iran pushes the national leadership toward a goal similar to that of the Iraqi Shias—a "civil society" within a nonreligious state. Even leading clerics like Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri, designated successor of Khomeini, have declared the experiment in Islamic rule formulated by the latter a failure. Rather than fear Tehran, we should anticipate that a democratic Iraq in which Arab Shias exercise a significant influence will provide an incentive for the consolidation of the reform process in Iran. After that may come major steps in a Saudi transition to a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy. Liberating Iraq, applauding reform in Iran, and assisting the subjects of the Saudi kingdom in dismantling the Wahhabi terrorist network, as well as removing the Wahhabi ideological monopoly over Mecca and Medina, means facilitating the definitive entry of the Arab and Muslim world into the global system of pluralism, capitalism, prosperity, and stability.

The beginning of such a transition also means that America can fulfill its promise as a liberator, making clear to millions of Muslims that we have turned a page in our history, and will no longer support corrupt regimes in the name of immediate interests or the amoral principle of loy-

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Reuters / Suhaib Salem

An Iraqi Shia kisses the entrance door to the shrine of the Imam Hussein, in Kerbala province.

alty to our putative friends, no matter who they are or who they kill. That kind of thinking led us straight to September 11, when the products of the Saudi-Wahhabi order demonstrated that 60 years of accommodation to the Saudis had only made it easier for them to strike at our heart.

Of course, to an outsider observing a Shia ceremony, it is unsurprising that the extremist reputation attached to these Muslims by the Iranian revolution should have stuck. Shia Islam is hot, not cold, and passionate, rather than passive; its adherents express an obviously authentic anguish over the cosmic drama in which their heroes took part, in Iraq, a millennium and a half ago. The trauma of Kerbala occurred in the century after Muhammad's death, when issues of authority were unsettled, civil war spread throughout the Muslim community, and extremist tendencies flowered. Muhammad was succeeded as the leader of the Muslims by four caliphs from among his companions. The third of the caliphs, Uthman ibn Affan, established the hegemony of his own family, a dynasty known as the Umayyads, over the Muslims. This nepotism was resisted by many, and among the dissenters there emerged an extremist group known as the Khawarij, who attacked all who differed from them.

Like the Khawarij, Wahhabi terrorists today massacre Muslims who differ from them, along with Christians, Jews, Hindus, and others—from the twin towers and the Pentagon to the teeming cities of Pakistan, where Saudi-backed terrorists, who have slain a hundred Pakistani Shia doctors, also conspired to murder the American journalist Daniel Pearl. Thus, for the Shias little has changed; the eternal confrontation of good and evil unfolds. The corrupt Umayyads have become the depraved followers of Saddam and the Saudi reactionaries, polluting Islam in the interest of political power. To liberate Islam from corruption, dictatorship, and terrorism is for the Shias a sacred mission. The story of Kerbala, which always lies heavy on their hearts, is the story of Muslims' resistance to tyranny and terror. It is the story of a righteous and pure leader, Imam Hussein ibn Ali, who led a small force to battle through the darkest night. That legacy inspires his heirs to confront the September 11 terrorists, the murderers of Daniel Pearl, and the hypocrites who squat in Mecca and Medina, usurping the vaunted role of "guardians of the Holy Sites."

Unlike the Saudi Wahhabis, Shia Muslims have never sought to impose their dispensation on the whole of the Islamic world community; nor have they attempted to impose theological conformity within their own ranks. Their tradition recognizes the rights of minorities, because they have always been a minority, and esteems differences in opinion, because their very existence arises from controversy and debate. In Iran, Shia Islam took an anti-Western direction that had more to do with the history of the Iranians and their relations with Britain and the United States than with their understanding of Islam. Elsewhere in the Islamic world—in places like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Albanian lands—Shias are best known for their commitment to education, enlightenment, the liberation of women, social justice, progress, and, most important, independence of thought, or *ijtihad*.

In 1991, America abandoned the Iraqi Shias to the mercies of Saddam's killers. Now, we have an opportunity to repair that mistake and, with their help, to establish an Iraq that will pioneer the new Arab and Muslim reality. They are there, waiting for our help, and eager to give us their help. We are asking them to leave their fears behind; so let us also move beyond our own anxieties. A good start would be to bring Sheikh Fadhel Al-Sahlani, Sheikh Kedhim Sadiq Mohammed, and others like them to Washington, to meet with the men and women guiding our efforts in Iraq, and to meet with the capital's press, the better to explain the future of Iraq as envisaged by Iraqis themselves. With or without our aid, they will always march in the footsteps of Imam Hussein, ready to confront evil. Let us give them the tools that may permit them to prevail. ♦

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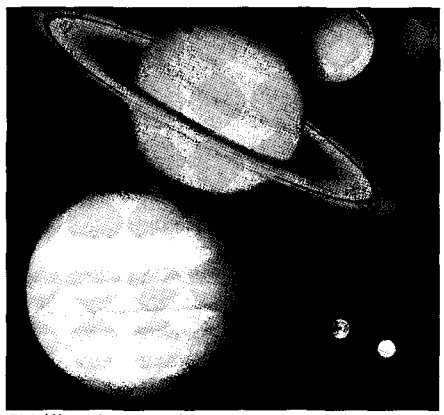

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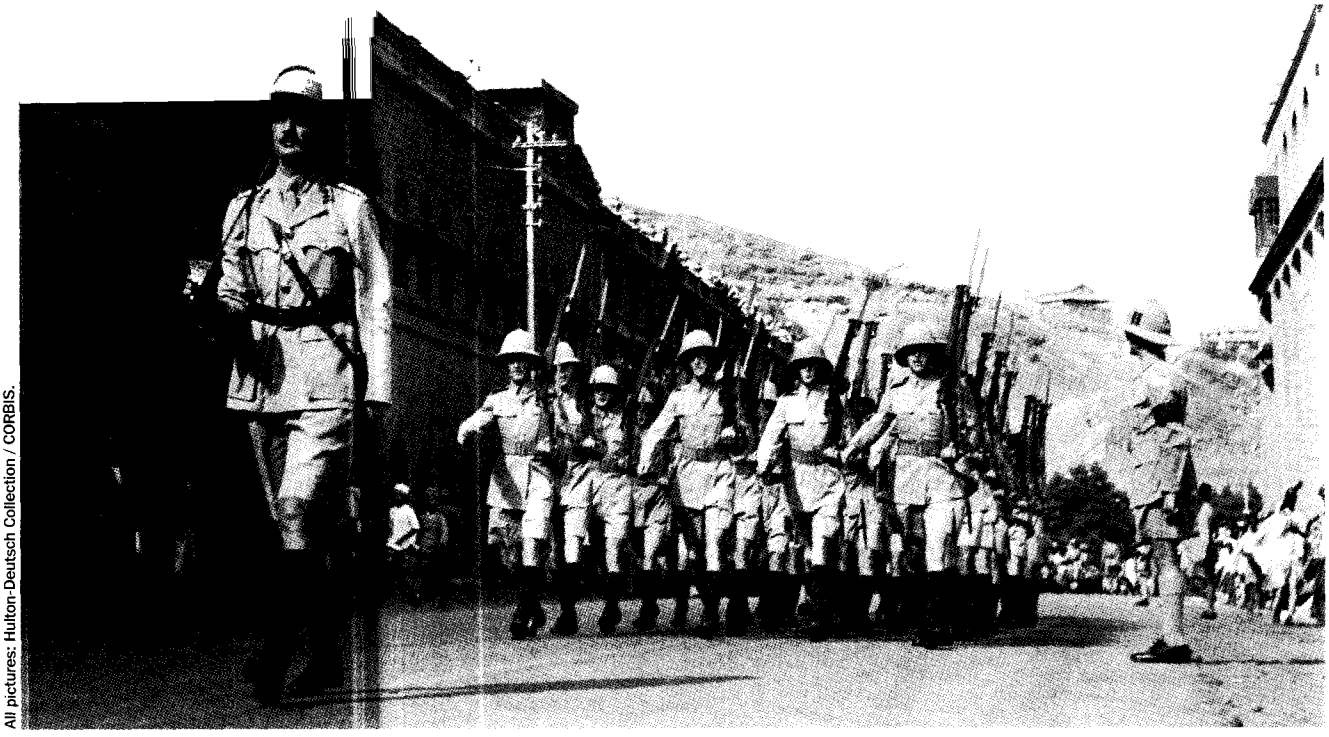

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Imperial Ambitions

How Britain won and lost the world

By Max Boot

At a discussion on a college campus not long ago, I suggested America was being forced to police the world as Britain once did, and that the American empire had something to learn from its British predecessor. This prompted an incredulous reaction from an earnest young woman with an English accent. The British regarded their lost empire as an embarrassment, she remarked, accurately enough, so why was I referring to it with approbation?

The long answer to that question may be found in Niall Ferguson's *Empire*. Appropriately enough, Ferguson is a Scot, for it was the Scots, as much as the English, who built the British empire. In *Empire*, he delivers a splendid history of Britain's imperial adventures. This is no whitewash; Ferguson offers a warts-and-all view. But unlike much of what gets written on imperialism, *Empire* isn't warts *only*; it also shows the more attractive aspects of British rule.

Contributing editor Max Boot is Olin senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power.

Those attractive aspects would not have been obvious to anyone during the empire's early days. As Ferguson reminds us, the British Empire began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "in a maelstrom of seaborne violence and theft," with successful pirates like Francis Drake and Henry Morgan looting Spain's New World empire.

Empire
The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power
by Niall Ferguson
Basic, 396 pp., $35

But it did not take the English long to establish themselves in more peaceful pursuits: exporting sugar from Jamaica, tobacco from the American colonies, and tea from China. "The empire, it might be said, was built on a huge sugar, caffeine, and nicotine rush," Ferguson writes, with typical insouciance.

To exploit commercial possibilities, the British set up a series of joint stock companies: the East India Company (for India), the Hudson's Bay Company (Canada), and others. Competing companies from other nations were vanquished in a series of trade wars, culminating in the Seven Years War (1756-1763), which ensured British dominance over India.

In its early phases, the empire in India was a private undertaking, run by the East India Company and its swashbuckling governors. The most famous, George Clive and Warren Hastings, returned home with fortunes to rival any maharaja's. For his troubles, Hastings became the defendant in a 1788 impeachment trial, with Edmund Burke making a virtuoso case for the prosecution: "I impeach him in the name of the English nation. . . . I impeach him in the name of the people of India. . . . Lastly, in the name of human nature itself." Whether or not Hastings was guilty of "gross injustice, cruelty and treachery" (he was acquitted), his achievements and those of his

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An Anglo-Indian polo team, c. 1880.

fellow "nabobs" cannot be gainsaid. They took over a country that had twenty times the population of the United Kingdom and eight times its output—and they did it with their own private army, made up almost entirely of Indian sepoys.

British expansion was driven not just by trade but also by the biggest mass migration in history. "Between the early 1600s and the 1950s," Ferguson writes, "more than 20 million people left the British Isles to begin lives across the sea." Spain tended to export mainly men, who intermarried with the local population. Britain, by contrast, sent forth both men and women, and their descendants turned whole continents into facsimiles of home. "New England really was a new England, far more than New Spain would ever be a new Spain."

As a result, the British generally found themselves helpless before uprisings of their own offspring. In the nineteenth century, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand won autonomy as self-governing dominions. This solution had been proposed for the thirteen American colonies by such thinkers as Adam Smith, but it did not find acceptance in Westminster. Instead George III's ministers tried to retain the colonies by force, an effort that was doomed to fail because, Ferguson writes, "London lacked the stomach to impose British rule on white colonists who were determined to resist it."

The British Empire had not started out with a particularly high moral purpose, but one evolved by the turn of the nineteenth century. Rising evangelical fervor in Britain convinced Parliament to abolish the slave trade in 1808. Economic determinists argue that abolition came about because the traffic was no longer profitable, but Ferguson shows that the law was passed "in the face of determined opposition from some powerful vested interests" simply because of a "collective change of heart."

This inaugurated a new era in which the British would export not only "goods, capital, and people" but also civilization. Victorian missionaries set out to provide "both spiritual and material assistance" to the less developed world. Ferguson offers a vivid profile of the best-known Victorian missionary, David Livingstone, a poor boy from a Scottish mill town who set out in the 1840s for Africa on behalf of the London Missionary Society. Livingstone suffered many setbacks, but English attempts to win "Africa for Christ" turned out to be pretty successful; today, as Ferguson wryly notes, "Africa is in fact a more Christian continent than Europe."

It was a different story in India. In the early years, the East India Company made no attempt to spread English values and barred its chaplains even from preaching to the Indians. By the Victorian era, however, a succession of high-minded administrators influenced by the twin currents of evangelical piety and liberal enthusiasm set out to reform India. The English tried with a fair degree of success to stamp out practices that offended them, such as female infanticide and widow burning. But attempts to Anglicize the subcontinent backfired spectacularly.

British rule was maintained through the Indian Army, 80 percent of whose men were Indians. In 1857 many of the sepoys mutinied. The proximate cause of this bloody uprising was a rumor that bullets were being greased with pork and beef fat, a suspicion calculated to offend Hindus and Muslims alike. The real reason, Ferguson writes, "was their essentially conservative reaction against a succession of British interferences with Indian culture, which seemed to—and in many ways actually did—add up to a plot to Christianize India." The mutineers acted with great savagery, killing many British civilians, including women and children. British troops responded in kind; a favorite punishment for captured mutineers was to be tied to a cannon and blown to pieces.

The Great Mutiny hastened the demise of "John Company." It also signaled the end of attempts to transform the subcontinent. Henceforward the British would "govern with, rather than against, the grain of indigenous tradition." This governance would be spectacularly successful, almost unbelievably so, considering how few administrators were sent out: There were never more than a thousand British members of the Indian Civil Service, backed up by 70,000 British troops in the Indian Army (and 125,000 sepoys), to administer more than 250 million natives. Similarly tiny numbers ran other colonies—there were just 1,200 British civil servants for a dozen African territories with a combined population of 43 million.

How did so few manage to lord it over so many? The essential answer is that most of their subjects did not find British rule terribly oppressive, espe-

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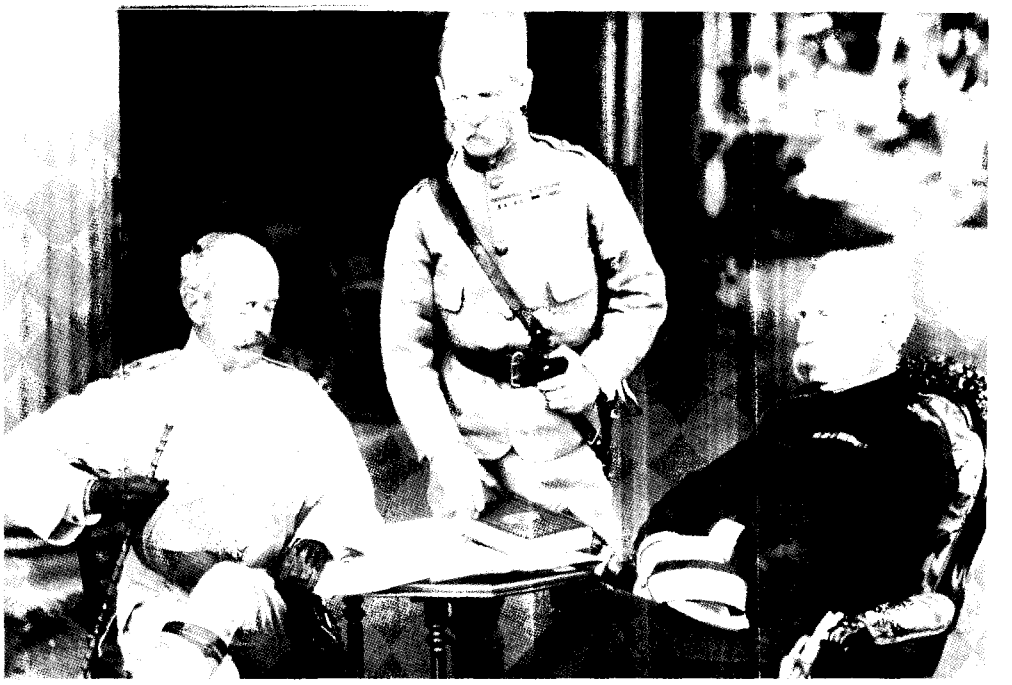
cially compared with preceding empires, such as the Mughals in India. British rule conferred many benefits: It made trade easier, life safer, and it built lots of valuable infrastructure, remnants of which can be glimpsed today from Capetown to New Delhi.

The British made sure to win over local leaders, many of whom wound up being sent to English schools. These educated elites would make trouble for the British later on, when they came to demand the same rights accorded to any other graduate of Oxford or Cambridge. But for much of the empire's history, the "babus" (as they were derisively called by snobbish Britons) were vital to London's rule.



Lord Roberts briefs his generals during the Boer War.

British hegemony was also made possible by technology. Telegraphs, undersea cables, steamships, railways—all these developments made possible the "annihilation of distance," as well as (in Ferguson's clever phrase) "long-distance annihilation." Armed with rifles, mobile artillery, and Maxim guns, Queen Victoria's soldiers fought a never-ending series of small wars to subdue everyone from the Ashantis to the Zulus. Accounts of these skirmishes should be familiar to us today; in their one-sidedness, they are remarkably reminiscent of recent American expeditions from Panama to Afghanistan.

The most impressive display of European military might occurred in Africa. In the mid-nineteenth century, colonial control of this vast continent was limited to a few outposts mainly scattered around the coasts. "By 1914, apart from Abyssinia and Liberia (the latter an American quasi-colony)," Ferguson writes, "the entire continent was under some form of European rule. Roughly a third of it was British."

In 1897, the year of her Diamond Jubilee, Queen Victoria presided over the biggest empire in history, encompassing a quarter of the world's land surface and about 444 million people. This actually understates the extent of London's influence, since British capital gave it a large say in the affairs of nominally independent Latin American nations.

There is a longstanding debate over whether, and to what extent, the British Empire paid for itself. Ferguson argues that on the whole it didn't. True, the defense of the realm did not cost much (British defense spending was just 2.5 percent of GNP in 1900, versus 3.4 percent for America today), and the empire did make a few men like Cecil Rhodes fabulously rich. It also provided benefits to the millions of Britons who moved to the dominions; "in most cases, emigration substantially increased their incomes and reduced their tax burdens." It did not, however, offer much tangible return to ordinary British taxpayers, "whose savings (if they had any) were generally invested in British government bonds through savings banks and other financial intermediaries."

What it lacked in lucre the Empire more than made up for in excitement. "As a source of entertainment—of sheer psychological gratification—the Empire's importance can never be exaggerated," Ferguson writes. Imperial themes ran through the popular novels of G.A. Henty and John Buchan, the poems of Tennyson and Kipling, music hall songs, popular newspapers, cricket and rugby competitions, and even advertisements. Popular interest in the empire reached its peak in 1900, when the British had to put down a revolt by the only white tribe in Africa—the Boers. The public thrilled to the heroic defense of Mafeking and the relief of Ladysmith. But the British paid a high price not only in lost lives but also in lost honor.

The horrors of the Boer War began to turn progressive opinion against the empire. The public went from revering "Chinese" Gordon and Kitchener of Khartoum to mocking them. Cartoonist David Low drew the new face of the empire: Colonel Blimp, "the stereotype of a superannuated colonial colonel—fat, bald, irascible and irrelevant."

The decline and fall of the British Empire remains widely misunderstood. In the popular perception, the empire was brought down by nationalist uprisings. Such movements, notably the Congress party in India, certainly existed. But they were never strong enough to destroy the imperial edifice.

The downfall of the empire began, Ferguson believes, with a pre-1914 miscalculation. London allied itself with Paris, thereby committing itself to a continental war should one break out, but it did not raise an army large enough to make war unlikely. The Germans gambled that they could defeat France before the tiny British Expeditionary Force made a difference, and they were nearly right. Britain and her allies did eventually prevail. As a result of World War I, the British Empire gained another 1.8 million square miles of territory, mainly in the Middle East and Africa. But this was a Pyrrhic victory that drained Britain economically

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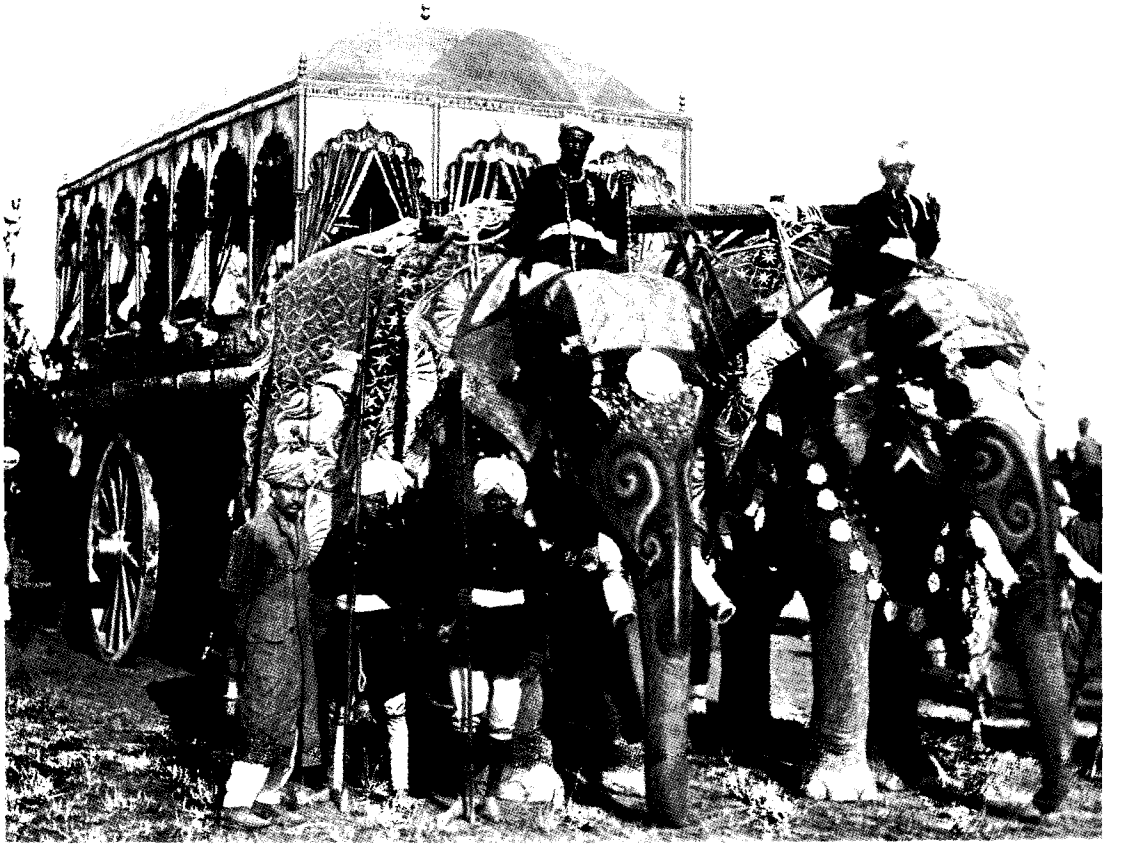

and spiritually. In the interwar years, it did not rearm, and did nothing to deter aggression by Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy.

As late as 1940, Hitler offered Britain a deal he thought the Anglo-Saxons couldn't refuse: "The British would be allowed to retain their overseas Empire if they would give Hitler a free hand to carve out a German Empire in Central and Eastern Europe." Some in the British cabinet, notably Lord Halifax, were willing to conclude such an ignoble bargain. But to Britain's everlasting credit, Winston Churchill spurned this deal with the devil and vowed to fight to the end.

In the war that followed, the Japanese seized important parts of Britain's Far Eastern empire, notably Burma, Hong Kong, and Singapore. It was more than a loss of territory; it was a loss of face. The Japanese took fiendish delight in working British and Australian POWs to death, showing that the "yellow man" could lord it over the "white man." Japanese attempts to foment an anti-British rebellion in India came to nothing, however, and the empire wound up making a substantial contribution to British victory.

But, again, the cost of victory was high; after 1945, Britain ceased to be a great power. It might have held its empire with the support of America. But under Franklin Roosevelt and his successors, American policy was implacably, and foolishly, opposed to the continuation of the British Empire. The extent of American hostility was revealed at Suez in 1956, when Eisenhower sided with Gamal Abdel Nasser, a pro-Soviet dictator, against Britain, France, and Israel.

An empire acquired over three centuries was dissolved in just three decades. With unseemly haste, the British scuttled out of India in 1947. At least 200,000 people died in the resulting intercommunal violence. Similar evacuations produced similarly dismal results in Palestine, Cyprus, and other trouble spots. By 2003, the sun had finally set on the empire. Only a few scattered flyspeck islands remain under British sovereignty; even Gibraltar soon will be lost.

Ferguson makes a convincing case for the positive role played by the British Empire in world history. It exported liberal capitalism, parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, and the English language all over the world. As an economic historian, he focuses mainly on the economic benefits, which were considerable. The British Empire made possible the first great wave of globalization and free trade. Britain benefited, but so did less developed countries. Investors seek security for their money, and in many chaotic places this was provided by British rule, which was remarkably efficient and nonvenal. As a result, a larger percentage of capital was invested in poor countries than is the case today. In 1913, 63 percent of foreign direct investment went to developing countries, as opposed to only 28 percent in 1996.

Can America repeat the example of the British Empire? Ferguson, who has recently decamped from Oxford to New York University, clearly wants us to; he believes that a Pax Americana is both achievable and beneficial. Indeed, as he notes, America today is more powerful, both economically and militarily, than Britain was at the height of its power. But he points to some problems.

Modern America, unlike nineteenth-century Britain, is a net importer of people and capital, not a net exporter. It also has a long anti-imperial tradition dating back to the original revolt against the British Empire. To this may be added the fact that formal empires have become passé since the worldwide triumph of Wilsonian ideals of "national self-determination."

But if Americans want to be convinced of the benefits of empire, as well as apprised of its costs, they need merely pick up Ferguson's dazzling book. It's all here, in compulsively readable prose that sparkles with bon mots, accompanied by handsome maps and illustrations. As American forces prepare to occupy Iraq, this is an apt time to ponder imperial burdens in historical perspective, and there is no better way to do so than to read *Empire*. ♦

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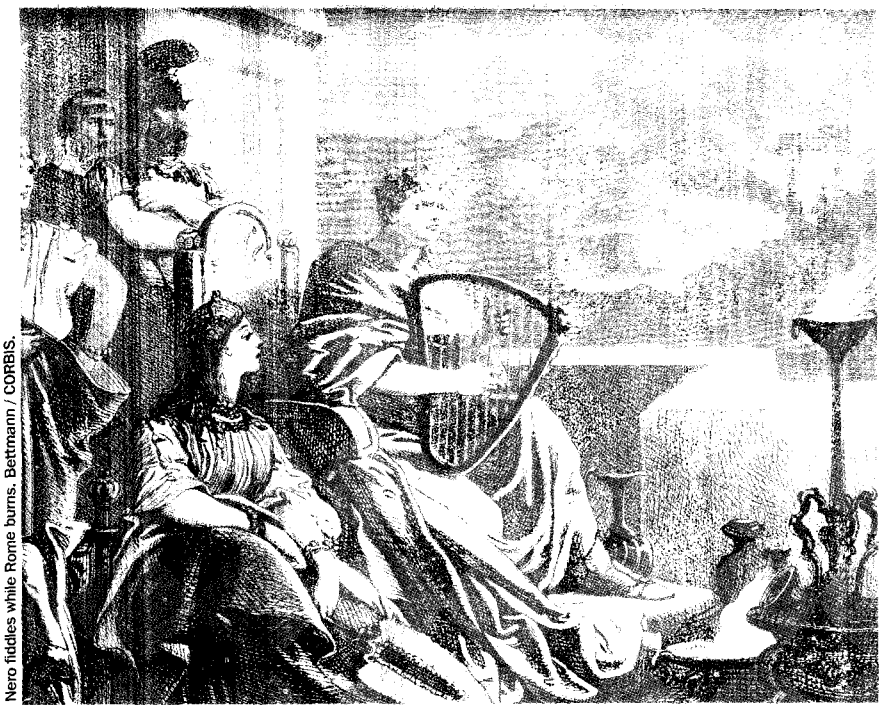

Nero fiddles while Rome burns. Bettmann / CORBIS.

The Last Days of the Republic

Colleen McCullough's novels of ancient Rome.

BY HUGH HEWITT

"It must be borne in mind," wrote Plutarch, "that my design is not to write histories, but lives." And that is what he did, prolifically. Plutarch was born around A.D. 46. By the time of his death in 120, he had produced dozens of brief "lives," often paired to compare and contrast a famous Greek's life with a famous Roman's.

The October Horse
by Colleen McCullough
Simon & Schuster, 800 pp., $28

Plutarch's *Lives* sits unread on many shelves, even in this era when talk of empire is not so rare. The disappearance of the general context of Rome from modern memory makes it hard for the average reader to pick up Plutarch and start reading—which is a loss, for the portraits are compelling. "Being naturally valiant and warlike," Plutarch writes of the general-turned-statesman Gaius Marius, "and more acquainted with the discipline of camp than of the city, he could not moderate his passion when in authority," and wrecked himself in "an old age of cruelty and vindictiveness." About Pompey: "Never had any Roman the people's good will and devotion throughout all the changes of fortune, more early in its springing up, or more steadily rising with his prosperity, or more constant in his adversity than Pompey had."

The types do not change much over the centuries, but the memories of these giants and their deeds are fading, which is why Colleen McCullough's six novels on the last eight decades of the Roman Republic are so welcome. Aimed at a popular audience, McCullough's series moves from the emergence of Marius around 115 B.C. through the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., when the armies of Octavian and Anthony defeated those of Brutus and Cassius. Her initial offering, *The First Man in Rome*, was published in 1990. The last installment appeared this past November as *The October Horse*. Each is riveting, and though not the blockbusters of her earlier *The Thorn Birds*, the series has won for McCullough admiration, even from professional scholars.

The reason, I think, is that these novels lure us into the Roman world and capture a sense of what it was like to be among the leaders of a vast empire constantly threatened on many borders and continually beset by political intrigue at home. At the center of her series are four men: Marius, Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar. Conventional biographies have to struggle to convey the greatness of the first three, in the face of the enormous reputation of Caesar. McCullough simply puts Caesar into the story at his birth around 100 B.C. and then follows his life as it unfolds, first in the shadow of Marius, then as a subject of Sulla's total power, as a partner of Crassus and Pompey and the enemy of Cato, Cicero, and others, and finally, as the giant of Roman history.

The supporting cast numbers in the hundreds, and the complaint about these books is that you need a scorecard to keep Scaurus separate from Sertorius and a map to separate the Long-haired Gauls from the Italian Gauls. In *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon's historical analysis is a warning against the overextention of imperial borders. Any reader of McCullough will know exactly what the problem is. The novels are detailed accounts of imperial ambitions, imperial politics, and imperial pitfalls.

When the PBS series *I, Claudius* hit America in 1976, the serialization of Robert Graves's novels gave viewers a crisp and chilling account of the intrigues that surrounded Augustus and his heirs. The poisons and the purges, the slaughter of subject peoples, and the ever-present intrigue leave an impression of the early Caesars and their empire that is powerful because the account is mostly true.

McCullough's novels, however, remind us of the time just before the Caesars. It was full of blood and carnage, but it was also full of individual excellence, when government by an

Hugh Hewitt is the host of a nationally syndicated radio talk show and a contributor to THE DAILY STANDARD.

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aristocracy was often inspiring in the choices it made. There were near-constant threats in the far reaches of the empire, and Rome's best men were dispatched to seal off and, if necessary, extinguish the trouble. Men of ambition could not rise unless they had commanded legions in battle, and those who were its greatest commanders rose highest.

This is probably one unease Americans have with the idea of empire. If our country is obliged by events to be as active at the borders of its influence as Rome's Republic was at its edge, we will watch a series of conflicts unfold and heroes rise in response to those conflicts.

Small-beer politicians do not much care for Caesars, even scaled-down and civilian-controlled Caesars. That's what McCullough drives home and home again: Free people freely appreciate valor and discount cowardice, even at a peril to their freedom. Most of the electors of Rome loved Caesar—without reserve, in a way that would overwhelm modern politics—because he was the perfect warrior. Even the steadiest of democrats closes the books understanding how the collapse of a Republic could occur under the weight of such charisma.

McCullough also provides a very useful understanding of the physics of empire: how, for instance, the failure of the Nile to rise above eighteen Roman feet and thus remain in the "Cubits of Death" could lead to revolution in Alexandria, a coup in Jerusalem, an invasion by the Parthians, and thus a stripping of the defenses in Spain. The books are a remedial course for those who believe in isolationism.

At the end of *The October Horse*, in the last of a series of illuminating and gossipy "Author's Afterwards," McCullough writes, "I think it is appropriate to call a halt to what has been an enormously enjoyable creative exercise: breathing life into history without distorting it more than the limitations of any scholarship made inevitable." Other readers must share my disappointment that she is calling it quits just as Octavian is becoming Augustus.

Perhaps she will reconsider. *Tim* and *The Thorn Birds* will not be flying off the shelves in a few decades, but her Roman cycle surely will still be there and still selling, especially if the empire-minded among us see their predictions come to pass. The American empire may not look like the Roman version, but the lessons of that enterprise will surely shape our coming history. ♦

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Eurocentrism

Why Western Civ. has got to stay.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

In 1992, as Europeans voted on the Maastricht treaty to formalize the European Union, intellectuals produced a spate of books on the "Meaning of Europe." Almost lost in the pile was an essay by Rémi Brague—a professor of medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy at the Sorbonne who has written on Maimonides, St. Bernard, and Leo Strauss—called *Europe, la voie romaine* (Europe: The Roman Way). While the other books from the Maastricht year were forgotten long ago, Brague's has won increasing respect from historians and philosophers for its extraordinary density of erudition and insight, and from lay readers for its transparent and unpretentious prose. It has been even more talked-about in recent months since, along the way, it judges the culture of Christendom against the culture of Islam, and vice versa. Its appearance in English as *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, albeit in a somewhat clunky translation, is a cultural event of the first importance.

Eccentric Culture
A Theory of Western Civilization
by Rémi Brague,
translated by Samuel Lester
St Augustine's, 205 pp., $28

For Brague, "Europe" is a synonym for "Western civilization." Those who would sum up this civilization with a few bywords—the free market, democracy, technology, imperialism—are misguided, Brague thinks, since other civilizations had those things first. Geographical descriptions are unsatisfactory, too. Not only are the borders of Europe disputable, the civilization's center of gravity has been constantly on the move: from the Mediterranean to the Rhine and Seine to the British Isles, and now, perhaps, to the East Coast of the United States. "The frontiers of Europe," says Brague, "are solely cultural." And his radical thesis is that those cultural frontiers remain *Roman*.

The Roman Empire's mark is highly visible in Europe even today. Brague notes that in Germany, the Reformation resonated especially in areas beyond the *limes*, or Roman frontier. (You could determine the location of the *limes* from a map of the 2002 German federal elections, too, with Socialist victories above it and Union victories below.) But to call Europe "Roman" is not just to go hunting for place names and rituals that have survived. Nor is it a matter of establishing the cultural clout of the Roman Catholic church, although Brague, a Catholic himself, has a sharp eye for its ongoing influence.

But that is not the core of what Brague means by the Romanness of European culture. Looking back on our cultural forefathers, the most important thing to remember about them is the humbling fact that, aside from some dabbling in the law, "the Romans invented nothing"—either in culture or religion. This weakness is, for Brague, Europe's enduring strength. Europe is a civilization that, by definition, has had to look outside of itself to define itself.

Europe's situation, that is, is one of "secondarity" in two realms—culturally, in the debt Latin pays to Greek; and religiously, in the debt Christianity pays to Judaism. Latin letters don't "follow" Greek literature—they pay obvious homage to it, and we turn to the unbowdlerized worldview of the Greeks themselves even today. Nor does Christianity "supplant" Judaism: It relies on the Old Testament's account of God, and in so doing preserves it. This course of events was not inevitable. "It would be much easier," writes Brague, "to pretend that the Old Covenant has purely and simply lapsed and has now been replaced by the new."

This, in fact, was the solution suggested by the second-century heretic Marcion, who proposed repudiating the Old Testament and expurgating the New in order to distill out of Christianity a new religion of "love." For having waged a polemic against Marcionism that preserved the "Jewish" element in Christianity, St. Irenaeus has been recognized as a father of the Catholic church. It is time, Brague writes, that we recognize him as a father of Europe as well. "It was religious secondarity," he writes, "that prevented all culture inherited from Christianity, as is the case with Europe, from considering itself as its own source. The refusal of Marcionism is thus, perhaps, the founding event of the history of Europe as a civilization, in that it furnished the matrix of the European relationship to the past and anchored it at the highest possible level." Brague is not the first to speak of the West's twin inheritance from Athens and Jerusalem. But the concept of secondarity is new.

One is tempted to ask whether this isn't mere neologistic nonsense. After all, isn't every culture "secondary" to the culture it follows?

The answer is no. Ideally, to illustrate what is special about Europe, one would need to have, for comparison, another culture that received both Greek and Jewish inheritances and dealt with them in a radically different manner. As it happens, there is such a culture: Islam.

In dealing with Islam, which is after all his field of study, Brague is unstintingly respectful. "I do not at all identify Europe with the civilized world," he writes. "To be outside of it is not to be

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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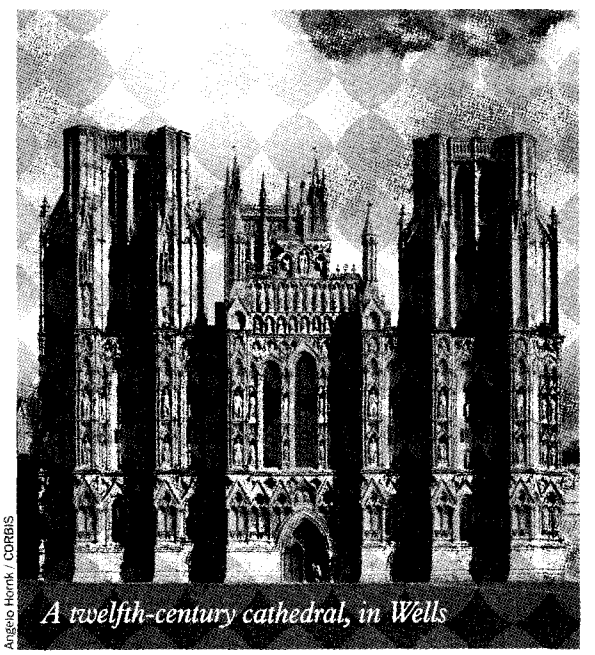
inferior to it." He insists on the West's enormous debt to Islam, not just for Islam's custodianship of Greek philosophy through the Dark Ages, but also for its influence on a variety of lesser phenomena we think of as European, from courtly love to scholasticism. Brague even echoes the complaint of many Muslim scholars that European scholars have willed themselves into amnesia about this debt.

Nonetheless, Brague levels at Islam, from a philosophical rather than a historical perspective, many of the criticisms Bernard Lewis did in *What Went Wrong?*, his 2002 volume on Islam's humiliating encounter with the modern West. Brague makes plain that Islam's means of assimilating other cultures has harmed it relative to Europe. A long tradition accuses Christianity and Judaism of having falsified the texts entrusted to them, so certain Islamic authorities ban the study of any holy text except the Koran—even for the purposes of understanding what Christianity and Judaism *are*. Such practices have consequences in "non-religious" walks of life. Islam has studied foreign cultures, of course, but for almost purely practical reasons. After ransacking foreign libraries for useful material, Islamic scholars have tended to "throw away the shell," as Brague puts it, and lose all contact with the civilizations from which the texts came. While granting exceptions (like the scholar al-Biruni, who studied India and Hinduism around A.D. 1000), Brague does not believe that Islam has ever consistently used its knowledge of other cultures to reexamine itself.

Europe, by contrast, has gone in for such self-correction with a vengeance. Brague takes note of the "massive social fact" that, for century after century until quite recently, European elites were chosen (through the university system) on the basis of their capacity to master foreign languages. Specifically, ancient languages, to the end that Europe might constantly revivify itself with reference to Greco-Roman antiquity. And this has created the basis for the characteristic European form of progress, which other civilizations might regard as evidence of weakness: the "renaissance," which Brague defines as "a return to the original texts against the traditions that claimed to follow them."

It is hard to do justice to the richness of *Eccentric Culture*, to the sparks of observation and opinion that Brague throws off as he forges his new reading of the Western past. He shows how scarcity of papyri and other writing materials resulted in the wholesale destruction of literary works. (Imagine how the preoccupations of the twentieth century would look to posterity if every single copy of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* were cannibalized to provide paper for *Who Moved My Cheese?*) He describes the Neo-Platonism that swept the Greco-Roman world in the third century as a "Noah's Ark" of doctrines; those worldviews that couldn't be assimilated into Neo-Platonism, like Epicureanism and Stoicism, were submerged in a flood of recopying, and have left only the faintest traces in our day.



Angelo Hornk / CORBIS

A twelfth-century cathedral, in Wells

Similarly, he wonders why the leading translators in the Arab world were often Christians. He finds it telling that European civilization is among the only ones in the world to consistently give children nondescriptive names.

He scoffs at those who think religious revivals can be engineered for public-policy ends. ("Faith does not produce its effects except where it remains faith, and not calculus. . . . We owe [the civilization of Christian Europe] to people who believe in Christ, not to people who believe in Christianity.") He speculates that, since many Westerners have used a study of Greek and Latin as an antidote to "barbarism," the simultaneity of decolonization and the decline in classical studies may not be accidental.

This is a book about antiquity with a surprising relevance to our contemporary predicament. Brague is particularly worried by identity politics, even though he describes it in different terms than one usually encounters. He thinks it may be positively "unhealthy" to have a culture of one's own—a worldview that one considers one's ethnic *property*, rather than an achievement. Two dangers of identity politics are present for contemporary Europeans. The first is the resurgence, under modern conditions, of Marcionism—or at least of its belief that the present generation is the repository of all wisdom, and that religious and secular traditions can be discarded with impunity. The second is the increasing belief among Europeans that Europeanness is "a guaranteed income and not an adventure," which is causing them to lose sight of how hard-won their civilization in fact is.

Brague appears to find this second prospect especially worrisome. "It could be that Rome is no longer in Rome," he writes, "and that the 'non-Europeans' are [now] fundamentally better able to take on the Roman attitude that has been Europe's good fortune." ♦

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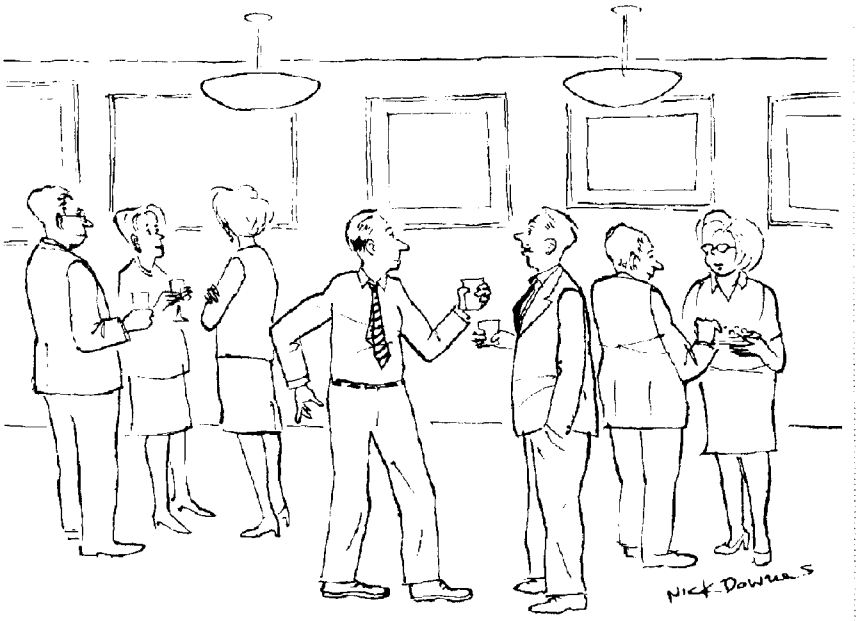

"So, I understand you're an Egyptologist."

Books in Brief

***The Worm in the Apple: How the Teacher Unions Are Destroying American Education* by Peter Brimelow (HarperCollins, 320 pp., $24.95).** Education these days, someone once declared, is "casting false pearls before real swine." Why are contemporary students so poor? In *The Worm in the Apple*, journalist Peter Brimelow makes the case that teachers' unions have hijacked our education system and, increasingly, our legislative organs as well. Brimelow acknowledges that some public schools still function with competence—but that achievement is sporadic and realized only through ever rising spending. Declining schools, he says, reflect sclerotic socialism compounded by out-of-control trade-unionism.

Brimelow is a punchy writer with a compelling, natural voice. His argument in *The Worm in the Apple* isn't novel, but the weight of new and damning examples makes the book important. He cites, for instance, repeated occasions on which teachers' unions have taken over the school boards responsible for negotiating their contracts. He shows the virtual impossibility of firing incompetent, lazy, and recalcitrant teachers. He reveals the ways in which union clout compels useless staffing. He documents the billions of dollars unions have spent on campaigns against school choice and reform of requirements for starting teachers—and the billions the unions make from dubious insurance schemes for their members.

A nation's fate derives at least as much from its schools as from its armies. Why, Brimelow asks, do we allow this scandal to persist?

—Jonathan Leaf

***Getting It Right: A Novel* by William F. Buckley Jr. (Regnery, 311 pp., $24.95).** The quest for a coherent conservative worldview—and a politically appealing wrapper to put it in—has a long and colorful history over the last fifty years, and that's the subject of *Getting It Right*, Buckley's latest novel. The protagonist, Woody Raynor, learns a hard lesson early in life when passion, treachery, Communist brutality, and a bullet to the hip leave him dedicated to rolling back the Red tide. In 1961 he finds a home in the John Birch Society working for the founder, Robert Welch, whose opposition to accommodation with communism morphed into a proclivity to see a Communist soul in nearly every anti-Communist conservative. Raynor, a Princeton graduate (and a Mormon who develops a taste for drink), discovers that Welch's society demands its followers abandon historical knowledge and doubts to embrace a conspiratorial vision that suspects everyone.

Leonora Goldstein, whose immigrant father died at the order of a Communist-controlled union, seeks temporal redemption at the side of Ayn Rand and her "Collective," the ironically named (at least ostensibly) group of disciples whose allegiance Rand required and received. Renaming herself Leonora Pound at Miss Rand's suggestion, the better to resemble the WASP heroes of Rand's novels, she meets Woody at Buckley's home, while helping found Young Americans for Freedom. (Among other real-life conservatives to appear in the book are Stan Evans, Lee Edwards, Alfred Regnery, and the leadership of *National Review*.)

Along the way, the two young protagonists, the lapsed Mormon and the renamed Jew, are drawn into *National Review*'s circle principally by Marvin Liebman, another figure who lived outside both the old liberal establishment and its wacky opponents. Conservatism's emergence as a credible, intellectually vibrant movement rested on the epiphanies of unlikely people who realized that the mysteries of life would not be subsumed under theories that falter in their attempts to explain too much.

As a novel, *Getting It Right* is fun. As a history of conservatism, it's even better. And at reminding us that human life doesn't require a "system," Buckley's writing is at its best.

—Winfield Myers

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Parody

CLARIFICATIONS OF THE DAY

FROM: Marc Thiessen, Pentagon Communications Office
TO: Members of the Press Corps

Here are the clarifications for the comments Secretary Rumsfeld made at this morning's press conference.

- When Secretary Rumsfeld said, "You think I give a rat's behind about whether the British fight in this war? Let's face it, they're just a bunch of pasty-faced hairless albinos who keep us up nights with the constant rounds of spanking, sodomy, and simpering," what he meant was, "The United States values the courage and determination of the British fighting force, which will prove to be an invaluable asset should the coalition decide that force is necessary."

- When Secretary Rumsfeld said, "Let's face it, the State Department's a bunch of limp-wristed sissies who wouldn't know a war zone from a crème brûlée and whose spines have turned to jelly from too much time spent with their heads sticking up their own rear ends," what he really meant was, "The administration is united in its resolve to exhaust all peaceful and diplomatic means to resolve this crisis. We in the Pentagon depend on the State Department's wise counsel and nuanced analysis."

- When Secretary Rumsfeld said, "Kofi Annan can go suck on my left ---. If that arrogant schmuck throws one more hissy fit, I'll sail my Navy up the East River and I'll send some artillery so close to his French-perfumed nostrils he won't need laxative for the rest of his life," he meant, "The U.S. values multilateral solutions and welcomes global cooperation. I salute the secretary general for his steadfast support of peace and his courageous defense of international institutions."

- When Secretary Rumsfeld said, "You know why we're embedding you sons of bitches in our units? Cause we want to see you hacks whimper and burn when the ---- hits the fan. We want to march your flabby skins up and down that damn desert till you beg us to shoot you. We want to expose you pathetic gutless Harvard pukes for what you are," what he meant was, "The administration respects and admires the press corps. We have made every effort to be open and forthcoming with our friends in the media."

As usual, further clarifications will probably be forthcoming as the day progresses.

the weekly Standard
March 24, 2003

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The Dilemma of Reforming a Post-Saddam Iraq

Russell Berman, Stephen Haber, and Barry R. Weingast are senior fellows at the Hoover Institution.

Two crucial debates underlie America's present situation in the Middle East. The first concerns whether the United States can graft a democratic system on an authoritarian regime such as Iraq's, a state that has no history of democratic rule. The second debate involves the sources of differences between the West—the societies of Western Europe and North America—and other cultures around the globe.

To understand how Western political and economic systems might be transplanted into a post-Saddam Iraq, we need to understand what is "Western" about our culture, politics, and economics. Those three aspects were not only developed in tandem but mutually support one another.

The West's first distinctive characteristic is its culture of literacy and individuality. Written records undercut oral myths, established factual accuracy, and allowed authors to adopt critical positions that challenged received opinion. Over several centuries, this gave rise to a culture whereby individual integrity trumped the conformism of community doctrine. This legacy of literacy and critical thinking became linked to a Judeo-Christian religious sensibility. The result is a culture that emphasizes the sanctity of life, the value of the individual, and redemption through historical progress.

The West's second distinctive characteristic is its political institutions. Those institutions take three forms: electoral suffrage, federalism, and checks and balances. Those forms operate jointly to limit the authority of government and thereby reduce the stakes of politics. They also work to limit corruption and rent seeking (a person or group seeking to obtain special political favors at the expense of others). Those institutions accomplish these goals either by creating ex ante vetoes that limit their leaders' discretion (for example, presidents must obtain congressional approval before acting on new policy proposals) or by creating ex post sanctions on leaders who exceed their authority (by being voted out of office).

The West's third characteristic is its system of economic institutions that support markets. Markets exist in other parts of the world, but only in the West do political institutions enforce property rights with such uniformity. Indeed, in most developing societies political officials prey on markets and private property. In many nations, administrators enforce some individuals' property rights but not others—giving rise to cartels and thereby precluding competitive markets.

The combination of a culture of individualism, institutions of limited government, and free market economies has succeeded in unleashing human creativity, producing wealth, and raising people out of poverty.

As beneficial as it would be to reproduce these conditions in Iraq, we should not underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. More than a change of regime will be required. **Establishing democratic capitalism will involve a profound transformation of cultural values, governmental institutions, and economic behavior.** This is a worthy goal, but it will require a long-term commitment.

Too often, new democracies in former authoritarian regimes fail because they lack one or more of the three critical characteristics that distinguish the West. Establishing a stable democratic-capitalist system in a post-Saddam Iraq will require both political and economic reform, as well as encouraging the virtues of a free society among Iraqis.

— Russell Berman, Stephen Haber, and Barry R. Weingast

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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